

KKJ



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

Another year draws towards its end and another edition of the magazine has been completed. It is always a bit strange how this happens and comes to be. Piece after piece is merged together – I hesitate using the word fit – and all of a sudden some contours reveal themselves.

Well, what I like to do at times it to push myself a bit and this has lead to a peculiar kind of segment in this edition of my magazine. To be honest, I always meant to write a bit about Arcane Sun, but their debut is such a confusing piece of music that I never felt that I had a definite opinion, left alone understanding of it. Whether this has changed is something that is rather difficult to answer though. Nevertheless, it feels good to have dealt with this piece of music as well as with all other albums/demos that surround Arcane Sun – including the precursors.

Special thanks go to the person behind the Irish Metal Archives for continuous support as well as insights into the history of all projects. PeterOtt as well as other members at the Metal Archives need to be mentioned and thanked as well; Azmodes, Marag.

I hope my writings have not shattered their impression of Arcane Sun's debut too much.

Aside from this section, there has been a review on Animus from Israel and Eczema from Hungary. In each case it proved to be a bit difficult, but with this latest edition this aspect has also been overcome and you can read my ramblings on this two rather obscure bands – the latter much more than the former of course.

Some of the early releases from Lebanon have been presented, but I have left out rumours that have some to my attention since and which add a real odd twist to ... something. The Peachonfuse thing is a strange piece of music and had the review re-written several times. Not as messed up as some might expect it from a Japanese band, but still ...

While writing these lines, the magazine is 70 (11) and 60 (10) pages in length and has not even been edited.

For some insights into the background of my magazine, feel free to read the following interview of mine:

<http://ionosonderec.blogspot.de/2012/09/empty-spot-on-web.html>

(see also the interview with Telegraphy as well as the preceding issue of this magazine)

Requests of interviews and reviews are generally possible ... I am always open to get in touch with new bands and artists. Also from non-metal genres.

One further note:

With this edition I have finally found a way to create the pdf as an e-book, which enables the reader of searching through as well as copy/pasting the text. I will update all previous editions if necessary.

And as I do not want to write this every time in every freaking interview:

I would like to thank every band and label for the promotion material, answers and so on. And thank you for the moral support and nice e-mails ... appreciated!

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Contact:

Oneyoudontknow at yahoo dot de

All the best ...

oneyoudontknow

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Outlook

Misanthropy / Fifth Dominion / Arcane Sun part

Misanthropy / Fifth Dominion / Arcane Sun

First of all: very special thanks go to the Irish Metal Archives for providing such a comprehensible kind of information on the band's oeuvre and history. Such dedication is rare and cannot be praised enough. Cheers to you! Links to each of the demos and albums appear at the end of each review. All of them can be downloaded for free. Additional thanks go to Peter Ott for providing an interview by Arcane Sun, as well as to Azmodes and Marag for helping with the Spanish part of the Burroughs quote.

Why not start at the beginning? It took quite a lot of years to get the metal thing started. Ireland has seen a considerable dominance when it comes heavy metal, which is due to the famous and well known band **Thin Lizzy** and their late vocalist and bassist **Phil Lynott**. 1970 marks the first release by this band and after a considerable amount of years this first grain sprouted and lead to new projects, which would follow a rather similar path. **San Bernadino**, **Stone Free**, **Phil Lynott's solo project**, **Stryder**, **Sweet Revenge** and so and so forth. Most of these were rather short lived and did not spread more than a demo – a considerable amount is presumably already lost and forgotten –, while none of these dared to try something a bit more extreme. According to the Metal Archives – using the search engine for release per year per country – the first band to push it a bit had been **Killer Watt** – power / speed metal –; look at the name and compare it with the other ones ... even here the differences are rather obvious. Furthermore, it is slightly amusing to see the title of their release: **Death (ep)**. Consider that the metal genre has a certain fixation of death, destruction and such, but it marks a shift away from the general direction of heavy metal, which is often not as morbid. The track titles of their output are:

1. Freddie's Revenge
2. All Hell Lets Loose
3. The Game of Death

It is somewhat of an irony of history that in the year of **Phil Lynott's** death the music in Ireland should take one of its first steps into more extreme regions of the metal scene. Maybe the cover artwork of **Killer Watt's** ep can be interpreted in such a way. The old way of music is dead, while something new is about to be unleashed. On the gravestone the letters 'RIP' are crossed out, while Death is written above it. "All Hell Lets Loose", while "The Game of Death" and a zombie is allowed to take revenge. Other releases of the same year sing about love, life and all this (hedonistic) stuff. Sadly, the lyrics for Killer Watts output are not available and therefore all of this discussion is not allowed to dig deeper into their concept. Nevertheless, the advent of power and speed metal indicate a shift into a different direction. But maybe I am reading too much into this.

Anyway, Killer Watt had not been meant to exist for too long and already called it quits in 1998. Yet out of its ashes arose, like a phoenix, **Moral Crusade** – a thrash metal band. 1986 marked the creation of the countries' first death metal band **Asphyxia** and their sole demo output Conflagration (1990). They changed their moniker shortly thereafter into **Morphosis** in order to avoid confusion with the Belgian band of the same name. Interestingly, this project is still active, even though the dates of their releases suggest a certain kind of hiatus at some point.

1990 **Judgment's** demo "The Perfect Murder" saw the light of day (they supposedly spread one prior to that but as of today hardly any information about it has hit the surface so far), and **Last Rites**, another short-lived thrash metal band, also threw some stuff among the masses (1990). Just a few names that give an indication of the what happened around these years in this scene. More could be and maybe should be named, but it is not the intention of the writer to give a comprehensible overview over all the facets of early "Irish metal". Anyway, after twenty years, the scene had seen the first extreme kind of musical developments.

It is important to keep these years in mind, because after that the metal scene saw some slight eruption and something similar can be seen in other scenes at that time as well. Hungary, which I have presented in a review on **Eczema's** second demo, has taken a development somehow similar: a lot of bands, with only one release pop-up and vanish. It would be interesting to see whether this is phenomenon can be described as a characteristic for the evolution or establishment of a genre.

In 1992 the road towards **Arcane Sun** has seen its first stone set on the path. **Misanthropy**, was the first band, which contained some of the band members that would play in the more prominent Irish metal band later on. It was a band, whose music had been on the forefront of the spread of the metal scene and of new projects. The dominance of **Thin Lizzy** was breaking away more and more, with new stuff from the underground emerging on a continuous basis. It would be misleading to describe it as an explosion of the scene, but a certain smouldering can be identified, indeed.

Misanthropy – Bruised Opinion (1992)

1994 the first non-**Thin Lizzy** full-length in the metal scene came into existence: **Ogre's** Dark Filth. Another small step in the development of the Irish metal, but sadly not many bands had been able to catch up and create something of equal proportions. Nevertheless, it indicates a certain shift in this type of music: since the late eighties and early nineties it is possible to identify a certain trends towards more extreme and aggressive kind of music in Ireland. A lot of bands came and went. Sadly, **Misanthropy** is no exception to this. One demo and the name was changed to **Fifth Dominion**, which then after two demos plus a promo changed to Arcane Sun.

From man's inhumanity to man comes a bitter hatred towards mankind itself.

This short sentence can be found on the booklet of the tape. The first part points to a phrase first used by **Robert Burns** in his poem 'Man was made to mourn: A Dirge'. It has a Wikipedia entry and it has seen a considerable amount of variations over the years (*). It reminds of course on the famous Latin phrase: Homo homini lupus est, coined by **Plautus** 195 BC.

Bruised Opinion contains four tracks:

1. The Price is Life (05:23)
2. Prisoners of War (07:00)
3. Sentenced to Die (06:39)
4. Hatred of Mankind (06:04)

Interestingly, the download by the **Irish Metal Archives** comes with an additional one, an instrumental intro of nearly one minute in length and a rather cheesy one at that – “you wanna know what death is” ... or something like that is thrown towards the listener. An error, then? Well, the cover artwork of neither the original release, nor the second version spread under the name **Fifth Dominion** show it and it opens a realm of speculation. As there are no track lengths on either booklet, it can at least be surmised that it is part of the opener and had not been listed separately, while the currently available separation is part of a confusion over the difference of style and concept. Ripping tapes is generally an interesting experience, especially when it comes to obscure stuff. Sounds plausible, right?

Line-up:

Wayne Clifford - Bass
Stephen Norton - Drums
Robin Bailey - Guitars
David McKeever - Vocals, Guitars

Eugene Ryder - Engineering, Mixing

Sadly, “Bruised Opinion” does not come with lyrics; unlike most of the other releases; excluding the Promo 1994 output of **Fifth Dominion**. Due to the nature of the concept and music of the death metal genre, it is hard to make out the texts by 'experiencing' them. Somehow this is a pity because the phrase discussed above remains detached from the music and the listener is therefore unable to connect the dots so to speak. The first demo of the succeeding band has more to offer in this respect.

Twenty years have passed since its release ... but despite its age it is still a piece of music that is able to unfold a distinct kind of fascination and maybe even atmosphere. It is anything but perfect and especially the strange balancing of the instruments is slightly irritating. Nevertheless, the actual song-writing has its distinct charm, even though the band follows a rather conservative and slightly flawed pattern with a too large emphasis on the vocals. Their part takes much space in the concept, but they appear not in a dominant kind of way. Muffled and often really unintelligible is the way they appear, which adds a certain kind of heaviness to the performance. Intense and dense are two terms quite appropriate for describing the performance of the band. Solos are an important aspect and also the small glimpses of the bass – all too often drowned by the rest – are quite enjoyable. Interesting is the general direction of the music. It swings between rather fast and even surprisingly doomy passages; like in “Prisoners of War”. One has to recognize the overall quality of their attempt.

Yet when it comes to aspects, whose aspect needs to be emphasized then it is the atmosphere. The dark alliance of the deep growls and the downtuned guitars deliver quite a performance, which receives some additional bite through the tendency to play rather slow at times. Add to this a level of versatility in handling the instruments and the mixture is quite peculiar indeed. It is a bit tricky to find references from the time when Bruised Opinion saw the light of day, because the Irish band presents the music on a rather extreme levels; not only in terms of the local standard. At times it all heads of in the direction of Master, while some moments later it all drops back into the region of doom/death. In terms of technical aspects, then the debut of the Canadian band **Oblivion** should be considered, while also **Darkthrone's** Soulside Journey is not too far away either. To make matters easy would be a reduction of Misanthropy on a comparison with the British band **Paradise Lost** but dirtier and more aggressive. From the perspective of a writer this feels slightly awkward and gives the impression that there had been no other projects at that time, whose music could be cited in this respect. Overall: Hints here and there can be given, while a definite supposition is rather difficult.

Anyway, despite all its flaws it is a great demo and a rather nasty one. One might ask whether the performance is an attempt to reflect the hatred to which the band refers to in their booklet. Fans of death metal should definitely give this dirty and well crafted piece of art a try.

(*) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man's_inhumanity_to_man

Available here:

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/misanthropy-bruised-opinion-demo-1992>

Interlude I

There are two bands called **Fifth Dominion**! It is important to separate them and in the course of presenting all of the bands prior to Arcane Sun, because it helps to shed light on the way history unfolded itself back then. There are two bands, because after the Promo 1994 output a lot of things changed. Line-up, style and concept – all of this headed into a different direction.

Generally, the Irish metal scene continued to spread. A slight decline in the amount of outputs per year can be found, while one of today's famous bands set its first milestone: **Primordial** with their “Dark Romanticism... Sorrow's Bitter Harvest...” output. Considering how rarely any bands from this era have remained active over the years, this is definitely noteworthy. **Ogre** and **Morphosis** would be two further examples, but both projects have not been able to spread music on a continuous basis. The general tendency had been: a demo here, a name change there ... in Ireland it all had been in its first stages and a “dominant” band aside of **Thin Lizzy**, who were not active at that point, was still nowhere to be seen.

Back to the main topic:

The following reviews will help to make clear why it is important to separate the history into two parts and not merge them into one. Things are often more complicated than they seem to be at a mere glance.

Fifth Dominion (I) – Pain, Rage & Laughter (1993)

Pain, Rage & Laughter is actually the second output of the Irish band **Fifth Dominion**. The first had been a re-release of **Misanthropy's** Bruised Opinion under this new moniker. The reasons for this switch are actually quite simple. As some might know, there is also a French band with a rather similar spelling of the term – **Misanthrope** –, who happen to own the copyrights of this name. Back then, they contacted their Irish counterpart, which then had to come up with something new. In terms of inspiration, a story by **Clive Barker** can be pointed to in this respect. On a side-note: there is one further active band with the same spelling from Colombia, but it seems the French band does not seem to bother much about them. Other “similar” projects from India, Malaysia and the United States are not active any more.

A similarity between the “previous” demo is the tendency of the band to use some strange intros, whose sound and style does not seem to fit into the broader context of the music. Maybe they want to provoke the listener a bit and create some kind of tension. Annoy or rather confuse seem to be two rather appropriate terms when it comes to actually describing the entire performance of **Fifth Dominion** on this tape. Why? Expectations are the issue here and the demo release of the preceding band **Misanthropy**. The rather dark and sinister type of technical death metal has set the bar rather high for the musicians. And this might have been the reason that they ignored it and drifted into a different direction. Here the tendency to explore the possibilities and conceptual variations, which are quite common in a young metal scene, have found expression.

Line-up changes can mark a break in the concept of the band; for good or bad. They can help to bring new influences into the group, which then can help to bring the music one step forward. How this played out in terms of **Misanthropy/Fifth Dominion** is hard to make out, because there are no sources that would help to lift the veil of mystery about the time when these demos saw the light of day. While **Wayne Clifford** left the band in 1992, **Paul Kearns** joined later as a second vocalist and in 1993 **David Knott** on the bass guitar. What impact did these new musicians and the dismissal of another one had on the direction the band progressed? Or did

Line-up:

David McKeever - Vocals, Guitar,
Keyboards
Robin Bailey - Guitar
Stephen Norton - Drums
David Knott - Bass
Paul Kearns - Vocals

Guest vocals on 'Vicious Circle' by Jeff
O'Reilly

everything came rather natural?

Whoever cooked this brew of death metal back in 1993, put some strange ingredients together. For starters, the cover artwork (done by **Niklas Sundin** of **Dark Tranquillity**): does one have to take the title "Pain, Rage & Laughter" literally? The visual expression of these emotions remind the viewer on the image of three monkey and their appearance in three different poses, which is synonymous for human behaviour in certain circumstances or in general. Somehow these three grimaces appear on the cover artwork and it definitely works for this type of music, but by adding the music into considerations some difficulties arise. While the first two terms are generally dealt with in the death metal scene, the last one is something ignored too often. Its part is allowed to pop-up through the use of parody (**Cannibis Corpse** ↔ **Cannibal Corpse**), while it is rare to see it appear otherwise. Also in terms of **Fifth Dominion** there is nothing that would indicate such a move; aside from a general amusement about some facets of the concept, though. What/where is the "Laughter" part, then?

Whatever, compared with the first output the entire performance has definitely a lighter touch to it. Thanks to the additional voice of **Paul Kearns** – **Jeff O'Reilly** appears as a guest on Vicious Circle and throws in some growls (he was also responsible for the logo) –, a contrast to the death metal ones by **David McKeever** is set in the music. How this plays out can best be examined in the track *Premature Existence*. As can be expected, the all too common flaws in the production tend to ruin it in some respect. Aside from the mere fact that this facet marks a welcome contrast to the unintelligible grunts from **Misanthropy**'s demo, another benefit is the likeliness to actually understand what the vocalists are "singing" about – without the need to consult the booklet – or an Internet site. Not always but to a considerable degree.

Technical death metal seems no longer be valid as a sole descriptor. It all has moved a bit towards the grindcore genre or punk as well as some modern instalment of death metal. Already the second track *Vicious Circle* presents these elements on some level. Blasts and the play of the vocals, the latter as outlined above, are the two additional facets that need to be emphasized on this demo, especially as none of these were used in such a way prior to this output. "Pain, Rage & Laughter" has more drive but comes also in a more playful style. It has not so much of the "we have to play some sick stuff here" tendency, which can be made out on **Misanthropy**'s first release. To throw in **Cannibal Corpse**'s output from that era into the discussion, gives an indication on the direction of the music since the first demo. It all appears a bit more balanced now, an aspect which becomes especially apparent in the way the vocals and the instruments create a harmony. While the first attempt presented these in a close alliance, this latest instalment breathes the air of the liberty to experiment and variate. The most daring example for this might be the surprisingly good instrumental *Vow of Silence*. Despite the absence of any vocal part, the catchy song-writing and the well written arrangements are really able to leave a lasting impression. It does not feel that anything would be missing. Compared with other instrumental tracks from the death metal scene – like those from the band **Death** for instance – it lacks a bit of the daringness, technical versatility and sickness. Nevertheless, its slightly psychedelic opening, the sweet break and riff barrage around the middle as well as the way it keeps pace and atmosphere is up, are aspects that leave a lasting impression of this demo.

There had been no lyrics for "Bruised Opinion", but this tape has them. Considering their general level of explicitly it is a shame to not be able to read these in terms of all outputs. Critique of social circumstances, aspects of guilt and remorse, an abortion from the perspective of a foetus and finally a contemplation about life and humanity. Each of these topics could easily fill an entire album alone would someone dare to explore one of these in depth. Nevertheless, these short statements can be used as a basis for a debate and they are a welcome contrast to the ramblings that are all too common in the metal scene. It seems that there is some kind of misunderstanding in terms of the track "Premature Existence". Of course, an obvious way of reading the texts, especially by bringing the cultural sphere into the discussion, would be: the band, despite their preferences for modern types of music, is at its core conservative and follows the Catholic paradigms on some topics. Is this really the case? Here is an excerpt from an interview:

P: *Premature Existence* is Robbo's song

R: it's about abortion through the eyes of the baby

P: foetus

R: ,which is pretty controversial, they [sic] lyrics to [sic] that I think are [sic] the typical anti-abortion image, that's not our view, we've got a neutral view

P: so anyone reading it, thinking it's a real anti-abortion song FUCK OFF, it's a real typical Catholic view, that's just not the case

(P = Paul Kearns; R = Robin Bailey; Source: The Oath Zine)

This settles it once and for all.

It feels like a different band and not only due to the new name this is actually the case. A more broaden conceptual approach, a certain variety in the song-writing and even some vague glimpses, which foreshadow the concept of **Arcane Sun** can be discovered. Here, the death metal concept still dominates everything, while additional facets appear now and then. It is rather mainstream oriented death metal with hints in some other directions as outlined in the text. With the Promo 1994 output – unreleased back then – the band would push the boundaries even more.

Available here:

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/fifth-dominion-pain-rage-laughter-demo-1993>

Fifth Dominion (I) – Promo 1994

Not many will know this release. In fact, it has only been released very recently and only as MP3s. It is not available physically, but it is important nonetheless. It marks the transition from the first instalment of **Fifth Dominion** towards the second one. The band had not been entirely satisfied with the result of this recording and might have called it quits, would it not have been for some musicians to carry one and to record some new music; Towards Elysium.

Actually, it is not surprising that they came to this conclusion. The three tracks on the Promo 1994 output are a mess. It is not so much the general tendency to break away from the concept of the earlier outputs, but rather the inconclusiveness of the entire performance. Maybe it is the thrashy way in which the opener unleashes its fury upon the listener, maybe it is the wah-wah-guitar solo part that comes as a surprise or the mixture of rock/doom in the second as well as in the third track.

Yes, the days of the death metal fury are over and already some of the future becomes apparent on this release. There are thrash, death and black metal as the dominant facets, while on a smaller scale doom and rock influences can be found as well. Technical elements are allowed to shine through now and then, but on a lower scale as they did before. Melody and counterpoints are no longer marginalized, while even some of the melancholy of the future music tends to shine through a bit. This output comes over more of an attempt to experiment to what levels the music can be brought and on what paths the band might be able to wander at some later point. It never really feels definite or conclusive. The listener is thrown hence here, hence there, but it is never possible to point to one of the three compositions as “representative” for the entire album.

Line-up:

David McKeever - Vocals, Guitar,
Keyboards
Robin Bailey - Guitar, Bass
Stephen Norton - Drums
Paul Kearns - Vocals

What makes it all interesting nonetheless is the aspect of contrasts that are developed throughout the release and this can be examined best on the third track “Reflecting”. This idea of having clean vocals parts accompanied by intense growls/screams, whose part can be described as an answer to what happened before, is an element **Arcane Sun** used as well; “Your Name” or “Longing for Edens Rain (and Winters End)” for instance. The previous demo output “Pain, Rage & Laughter” started this “two vocalist thing” for this project, but on a considerably smaller scale and also with a different focus when it comes to the song-writing and how all had been merged together. It is a facet that appears on a marginal scale, but will certainly stick with the listener due to their extreme contrast to the “ordinary” approach.

Yet the most striking aspect is the overall laid-back atmosphere of it all. A really calm, sedated one and with only glimpses of the band's history shine through ... somehow. Influences and references too numerous to name them all have been merged together for this piece of art. Music for a transition that was never supposed to happen or rather the way it materialized in the end. While the difference between **Misanthropy**'s first demo and the first by **Fifth Dominion** is some sort of a hop, the transition towards this piece of metal is some kind of jump – jump with little consideration for the direction and the space between the feet.

The Promo 1994 is noteworthy for its historical merits. It helps to shed some glimpses unto the music, for which Arcane Sun has received some attention.

Available here:

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/fifth-dominion-promo-1994>

Interlude II

If you ever want to point to a specific time to which can be referred to as a turning point, then it would be with the release of the 1994 Promo; a piece of music the band had never been entirely satisfied with and kept it hidden from public until very recently. **Fifth Dominion** changed considerably, especially in terms of the line-up:

David McKeever - Vocals, Guitar, Keyboards Robin Bailey - Guitar, Bass Stephen Norton - Drums Paul Kearns - Vocals	Cory Sloan - Bass Stephen Norton - Drums Brian Carroll - Guitars Feargal Flannery - Guitars, Keyboards Paul Kearns - Vocals
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With these new band members the band moved into a different direction. The music changed, became much more experimental as well fascinating.

This was not the only change at that time. The Irish metal scene had seen its supposedly first non-**Thin Lizzy** full-length release: **Ogre's** *Dark Filth* in 1994 and the debut albums of **Cruachan** and **Primordial** in 1995. Interestingly, the first had been spread by the band themselves, while the latter two were distributed by a German and a British label respectively. Something rather uncommon in these days in terms of bands from Ireland. It all moved a bit up and down back then, while some kind of explosion cannot be made out. There underground was there, spread its release, but refused to thrive over excess.

The two succeeding demo releases make up basically a good part of **Arcane Sun's** debut album, but here in generally rougher versions and with additional elements that would play no role later on. This is of some importance, especially once the music is approached from a broader perspective.

Fifth Dominion (II) – Towards Elysium (1995)

There we are ... **Fifth Dominion**, the second attempt. Maybe it would have been better to change the name, instead of continuing under the old moniker. Things would have been much clearer with such a decisive cut. Reality is messy and has often none of the orderly concept one would long for. Nevertheless, the first compositions of **Arcane Sun** appear on this very demo. To be frank, their debut album is rather a compilation than an ordinary output, like countless other bands tend to spread it. *Towards Elysium* marks the first focal point in the band's history. Even though it maybe be of some importance to have at least taken a small dive into all of the releases, which preceded this first major output, when it comes to discussing the music of **Arcane Sun**, the last tape by **Fifth Dominion** cannot be neglected.

... and this output is of some additional importance: it reveals part of the schizophrenic nature of **Arcane Sun's** debut.

In terms of the music, the style and the approach it is difficult to place it all in such a way as to create a thorough red line. There is a break ... and it starts with the "Pain, Rage & Laughter" and widens with the "Promo 1994" output. Therefore, with this 1995 one, it may not been a complete restart, but it is safe to say that the band tried to reinvent their concept a bit. What had been death metal at some point, became a mixture of death and doom metal. The contrasts, odd juxtapositions on the preceding demos, are now an important aspect in the band's approach. Heaviness and aggressiveness are no longer dominating the compositions, but have to share the space with calm moments and it is difficult to say which of these extremes has the larger impact. In case someone has followed the band over the courses of the years, then this person would have to admit that the evolution since the early days of **Misanthropy** is quite remarkable.

Four tracks are on *Towards Elysium*, all of these would later reappear on **Arcane Sun's** debut. The contrast with the later versions, leaving the aspect of the production aside for a moment, is the overall coherence of the music on this demo. **Fifth Dominion** does not give the listener a chance of contemplation; the tension is maintained and kept up all the time. Maybe it has to be this way, maybe they did not want it to break apart or give the impression of uncertainty. After the shifts in the line-up and the ever changing direction of the music, which lead to a rather chaotic mess on the Promo 1994, the 1995 output feels much more controlled and with a clear idea behind it.

The death metal parts can be examined in eruptions rather than in longer passages like they used to. This genre is allowed to shine through, wake memories on the band's history, and adds a punch to a certain focus on the doom influences; **Cory Sloan**, the bassist of the band, would play in

Line-up:
Cory Sloan - Bass
Stephen Norton - Drums
Brian Carroll - Guitars
Feargal Flannery - Guitars, Keyboards
Paul Kearns - Vocals

a more psychedelic doom band called Thy Sinister Bloom at that time. Anyway, the fury or aggressiveness of their early days are actually only allowed to shine through in one track: "Sundrenched (Beneath the Very Skies We Sought)". A strange and somehow even archaic praise of the sun appears in the lyrics and out of this one last burst of death metal inspired music the band **Arcane Sun** arouse like a Phoenix. The band had been drenched by the death, or, to put it more broadly, by the extreme metal, but preferred to venture away from it with each of the outputs.

Calm (acoustic) guitar parts have found their way into the music, the compositions open with keyboard textures – a calm ambient-inspired counterpoint – and dynamic patterns in the arrangements that add some additional twists to the music. It is strange how the opener has these metal riffs, which are not allowed to have much an impact later on. They set the stage, but are an illusion after all. A couple of minutes reveals the concept of the band much better.

Yet the release has more to offer. While "Pain, Rage & Laughter" deals with a lot of social issues and even discusses the aspect of abortion in a single kind of way. These days are over and the name of the 1995 demo gives it away.

Elysian plain...where life is easiest for men. No snow is there, nor heavy storm, nor ever rain, but ever does Ocean send up blasts of the shrill-blowing West Wind that they may give cooling to men. **Homer**, *Odyssey* (4.560-565).

and

According to Eustathius of Thessalonica the word "Elysium" (Ἠλύσιον) derives from ἀλυουσας (ἀλύω, to be deeply stirred from joy) or from ἀλύτως, synonymous of ἀφθάρτως (ἀφθαρτος, incorruptible), referring to souls' life in this place.

(Sources: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elysium>)

The topics have become more personal and are some kind of meditation about one's origins and final destiny. Furthermore, they appear in the way of an actual journey, as if someone would reflect upon what happened at some point and what effect these impressions had. They is a mystical touch to it all, a narration with an emphasis on metaphors without trying to come over too pretentious or artificial. Yet these aspects play a larger role in the first two compositions, while the track "Sundrenched (Beneath the Very Skies We Sought)" is more in the ordinary metal kind of way. Rather intense music comes with intense lyrics and these are on the spot: very short and fragmented paragraphs (four lines and expressed with an aggressive voice) have a counterpoint with the wording "Sundrenched" (with a clean and maybe even chanting voice). The Promise (A Culmination in Sorrow) is more of an epilogue, after the burst of energy of the preceding piece of music.

What makes it kind of a challenge to deal with the demo in a proper kind of way is the general lack of comparativeness with the earlier two outputs. The long used – now changed – description at the Metal Archives of "technical death metal" is definitely misleading, because the demo foreshadows the path the musicians proceeded on. Compared with the more familiar version of the four compositions, the old style has much more emphasis on the guitars and on death metal. Nevertheless, the oeuvre already presented the art with the clean vocals, the calm interludes and the extreme switches in the aggressiveness. Here all is rawer, more intense, and unpolished. **Arcane Sun** + X; if you know what I mean.

Influences? References? The debut from **Paradise Lost** points in the correct direction and the one from Anathema is also not too far away; maybe **My Dying Bride** should be mentioned as well. The difference to these three bands is the general approach of **Fifth Dominion** in this respect. While the aforementioned ones stuck to a peculiar kind of death / doom, the folks from Ireland offered something more in vein of **Decomposed** but here with more facets, variety and occasional emphasis on the doom stuff. Towards Elysium has more breadth and sounds more daring. What makes this demo interesting is a comparison with the version, which has found its way on **Arcane Sun**'s debut output. Yet, this early piece of music is not only recommended to those, who want to dig a bit deeper into the history of the more famous Irish metal band, due to the overall quality and the generally strange conceptual approach, it can also be recommended to those with a fancy for things that fall out of the ordinary routine.

Available here:

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/the-fifth-dominion-towards-elysium-1995>

Arcane Sun – Eden Eclipsed

On the surface it might only be a change in the name, but the development cuts considerably deeper. **Misanthropy** became **Fifth Dominion** (actually two bands) which became **Arcane Sun**. And with each further progression, with each further output the musicians moved away from their origins; and this would be death metal.

First of all, the version of the compositions on the bandcamp entry are not of the best quality. The sound is not in a continuous flow and quality. Furthermore, it comes over slightly warped and this does not improve the impression the listener might get from the music. One of the benefits of a tape I guess.

Fifth Dominion's Towards Elysium was basically a restart and **Arcane Sun's** Eden Eclipsed is a transition. The former takes the listener back to the early days of **Fifth Dominion** and presents a merging of death metal with doom elements (among others), while the latter output presents the music with even less heaviness, aggressiveness and intensity. It is a trend that will continue throughout the rest of the band's "career" (it is a bit difficult to find the proper word here).

Not all has seen a reinvention, though. The screams/growls are still there, the extreme switches in tempo appear at times, the clean vocals are still very dominant and of course the variation in the compositions are an important aspect of the music now. A shift can be made out in the dynamics of the compositions, whose focus is less on the death metal but more on something that appears in the realm of rock, doom and Gothic. There are always counterpoints, extreme contrasts, but in scale (amount, level) they have less impact on Eden Eclipsed. With each track the music becomes more intense, however it does not even get close to what the musicians delivered on the releases prior to this one.

Another shift has to do with the appearance of keyboards outside of an element to introduce a track or to fade it out. Despite a rather subpar production, it is possible to get a glance into the way the band wanted to progress. They fill the gaps, support the guitars and help to create the atmosphere. As usual, the performance is kept simple and is not allowed to unravel its full potential. All this had been recorded at the Kildare's **Poppyhill Studios** with the assistance of **Emmett Rees** (Lunar Gate).

Aside from this, similar to the tracks on **Fifth Dominion's** Towards Elysium also the ones on Eden Eclipsed appear slightly different on the debut album. A short comparison of the track lengths reveals this:

Line-up:

Mark Higgins - Drums
Brian Carroll - Guitars
Feargal Flannery - Guitars
Paul Kearns - Vocals
Cory Sloan - Bass

1. I Was Alive Then... 08:20 vs 06:24
2. Your Name 08:28 vs 06:55
3. The Promise (A Culmination in Sorrow) 07:40 vs 05:44

The missing parts are often nothing but keyboard layers, whose purpose has been discussed above. Actually, while the last demo of **Fifth Dominion** is rather like "**Arcane Sun** + X", the description for the first demo of this new band is a similar, with the exception of the algebraic sign, which points in the direction of a "minus" here. Especially the impact of the aforementioned instrument had been watered down considerably on the debut; beyond what had been written on earlier. It seems the difference between FD's third demo and the debut of AS is smaller, compared with the output that had been spread between these. Maybe this has to do with the overall polishing and balancing of the elements.

Technical death metal can only be found in glimpses and structures, while the emphasis is more on a broader approach. The vocals switch between clean ones, growls and screams, while the music shows and equally inconclusiveness of what to offer to the listener. Doom metal has larger share of the performance, but it not yet able to create the special atmosphere that this facet has on the debut output.

Primordial might have been a source of inspiration when it comes to the shift in the direction of **Arcane Sun**. **Paradise Lost** as well as **Anathema** can be brought up again as well. **Cruachan** just seems wrong, as does **Ogre**. It is difficult to place this band into the broader context of the local metal traditions, because when **Arcane Sun** released their art, not many metal albums – full-lengths that is – have seen the light of day up to the year 1996: 36, with **Thin Lizzy** being the main contributor. This focus has shifted considerably since though.

Nevertheless, this is more of a collector's item and something for those, who like to dig deep into the evolution of a metal scene. Maybe this impression would be different, should a less worn down tape hit the surface somehow, somewhere.

Available here:

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/arcane-sun-eden-eclipsed-1996>

Arcane Sun – Arcane Sun (1998)

Arcane Sun's debut release cannot be discussed without two other outputs: **Fifth Dominion's** Towards Elysium and **Arcane Sun's** Eden Eclipsed. A short comparison of the track lists reveals the reasons for this.

Fifth Dominion – Towards Elysium

1. Canto I (The Search)
2. Canto II (The Arrival)
3. Sundrenched (Beneath the Skies We Sought)
4. The Promise (A Culmination in Sorrow)

Arcane Sun – Eden Eclipsed

1. I Was Alive Then...
2. Your Name
3. The Promise (A Culmination in Sorrow)

Arcane Sun – Arcane Sun

1. Canto I (The Search)
2. I Was Alive Then...
3. Sundrenched (Beneath the Very Skies We Sought)
4. Avatar
5. We Stood with Time
6. Your Name
7. Canto II (Arrival, and Submergence)
8. And the Waters Were Like Wine
9. Longing for Eden's Rain (and Winter's End)
10. Promised (So Many Years Have Passed)

As can be seen, this first major instalment of the Irish band is at least in some part a compilation of older material. A bit of an hypothesis: judging from the peculiar way of merging the two demos together, the material belonging to **Fifth Dominion** (1, 3, 7, 10 [renamed]) gives the idea of laying the basis, the foundation, while the rest had been squeezed in between. These pillars hold all together, while the rest fills the gap and presents the pleasantries. The necessary heaviness and aggressiveness on the one side, which represents the old days and history of the band. Whereas the rest reveals the progression and the evolution of the musicians as well as the band/s; the modern instalment of their way of seeing their kind of music, so to speak. It is a strange juxtaposition of facets. Especially as these do not come over as a coherent and conclusive picture. Back in the days when **Arcane Sun** came out, reviewers pointed to the first track as not fitting to the rest of the art. While this is most certainly true and listener are even encouraged to start the album with the second track, it is necessary to remember that the reasons for this 'misfit' have to do with the overall conception of the debut. The schizophrenia inherent in this release does not end there ... it actually starts at that point and follows it through until the very end.

Line-up:

Mark Higgins - Drums
Brian Carroll - Guitars
Feargal Flannery - Guitars, Bass,
Keyboards
Paul Kearns - Vocals

For the recording the band returned to the **Poppyhill Studios** in Kildare, but this time **Willy Hayden** was responsible for the recording and the mixing. Somehow it is nice to hear the band will a proper sound for once. Each of the preceding demos had been rather wanting in this regard. Not only the aspect of balancing had been an issue, also the overall sound left something to desire. It never really felt that the various instalments of the bands were actually able to present their art in a proper way. Sadly, even on the debut there are some small nuisances and flaws; the cymbals, the bass-guitar and also the voice are by no means optimal. However, compared with all outputs prior to this one, a huge step in the right direction can be dotted down.

From what has been outlined above it can be fathomed that this release covers a rather large area of various musical conceptions. In fact, at maximum intensity the music heads for a mixture between black/death metal, while the minimum would be some calm version of folk/ambient. This large contrast adds a schizophrenic touch to this CD. Recall how uncertain the musicians had been over the years in terms of a conceptual direction and to what degree each of the outputs presented the music with new as well as surprising facets. It never felt that they were repeating themselves. Progression and evolution always occurred on a distinct level. Even on their first major output the band does not shy away from this tendency. To be extreme seems to have been a driving factor over all the years the musicians had been active together. On **Arcane Sun** this can be best examined by a listening to the tracks "Sundrenched (Beneath the Very Skies We Sought)" and "We Stood with Time" in a row. Surprisingly, the keyboards from the previous demos – first as merely an instrument to create some interludes, then allowed to accompany the guitars – have mostly vanished and only on vague, nearly negligible levels they make an reappearance. The debut presents the **Arcane Sun** with a very basic set of instruments, while the music itself is anything but ordinary.

While we are at discussion differences, the tracks from the previous release have seen a rearranging for the debut. Especially the last track "Promised (So Many Years Have Passed)" astounds with its overall lack of guitars, heaviness and aggressiveness. Similar to the opener "Canto I (The Search)" the vocals are now some kind of unintelligible whispering with the result that it is nearly impossible to understand something of the texts; the contrary was the case in the early editions. Especially the latter aspect is a welcome change though, because the clean singing voice is anything but convincing on the demo – not on the whole but at times.

The schizophrenic aspect has not been dealt with in its entirety though. While the music is the main focus of course, the lyrics need to be discussed as well. As outlined in an interview for the "**Fitted Kitchen of the Living Damned**" magazine (no. #2) "Towards Elysium" has a coherent narrative in terms of the lyrics, while the succeeding demo "Eden Eclipsed" lacks it. At this point the issue of the compilation should be brought up again and as can be seen from the track list, the order of the original tracks has been changed. Therefore, while the older compositions can be pointed towards as pillars for the general direction of **Arcane Sun**, this has received a disruption and it is not possible to ameliorate this aspect on the debut. It seems odd that the band ignored this issue. Was it not possible to merge the previously un-/released compositions in between? Was the topic already exhausted with these four piece of music and had the band been unable to imagine something that could continue the earlier line of thought? And finally, why was it even necessary to rip these tracks apart?

(the following came to light after the main part of the review had been written:

The four tracks from FD's Towards Elysium mark one segment; "I was alive then" and "Your Name" from the 1996 Eden Eclipsed is another one, while a third appears on the debut: Avatar, We Stood with Time, And the Waters Were Like Wine & Longing for Eden's Rain (and Winter's End). The order to the last one is unknown and not explained in detail in the interview.

Source: <http://www.underground-empire.de/mags/UE-MM011.HTM#16>)

It is therefore not only the music itself that is likely to raise some eyebrows, also the texts offer anything but a conclusive picture. Fragments have been merged together, but as the album is praised considerably – back then and still today – it might be necessary to ask whether the debut had ever been placed into a broader context or whether it had only been portrayed as a single decontextualized entity. Even though this is more of an speculation, the latter point seems to have some amount of validity, which is hard to refute. A lot of reviews on this album are available on numerous sites throughout the Internet, but aside from some general bewilderment or confusion about the direction of the band or a criticism of the breadth of the musical concept, nothing else is brought up.

Yet all this should not discourage anyone from listening, experiencing and (definitely) enjoying the performance of the Irish band. It is difficult to point to one single outstanding characteristic ... maybe they all together create this special atmosphere. Some will point to the wide range in the vocals, whose facets include death metal growls, black metal screams, whispering and clean singing – even in a timbre rather uncommon for most extreme metal bands. Especially the latter leaves a very positive impression, because through this rather emotional and personal way of expressing the lyrics they receive an additional emphasis and colour. Death and black metal bands rarely reach out for such elements in their music, and even in the so-called "pagan" realm such facets are by no means common. Add to this the exotic status being a band from Ireland – the home of various delicious types of beer and some famous type of making music – then you have a mixture that is definitely able to gather some attention. Remember, merely a bit more than a handful of full-length metal albums had seen the light of day until the end of 1998 – ignoring **Thin Lizzy** again.



Arcane Sun is not an ordinary metal release. It breaks with the conventional way of approaching this genre and for a debut release it is of such a daring quality and conception that one simply has to admire the band for actually pulling this stunt. Even though two terms are generally associated with the band – doom and death metal –, these do by no means cover the musical facets in their entirety or help to make things clear. The combination of these two genre descriptors point all too often in the direction of a peculiar type of metal: mostly slow but with bursts or dominant aspects of death metal. **Arcane Sun** does not fit into this scheme. Also the atmosphere is different and the Irish musicians do rarely offer something comparable. Maybe it is even possible to describe the music as uplifting melancholy. There is no intense depressive touch to the performance, because the vocals help to break out of this dark mood somehow. Engaging could be a proper term in this regard. Somehow **Arcane Sun** wants to move the listener on an emotional level, maybe even go as far as to start a some kind of thought process. Today in the depressive black metal scene – and maybe even in terms of the funeral doom one – it seems to be the other way around. You cannot pity the musicians because they do never give you the means or chance to do so. The communication comes through metaphors, whose construction leaves open some kind of interpretation; especially in terms of the overall narrative.

The name of the band is a curious thing by itself. I do not have an interview at hand that would present a definite explanation in this regard, but it can at least be surmised that the last demo of **Fifth Dominion** – Towards Elysium – and the in it expressed topics had an impact or can be traced as the sole source. Whatever this inspiration had been, the starting point is merely of secondary importance. The first would be the intention of expressing something and putting the band in a certain context – without further sourcing some reference to paganism can be put forth. The texts are rather introspective though and do not overtly reach out to some mystical surrounding being, sphere or other metaphysical element. Nevertheless, the “arcane sun” can be understood as a fetish for the longings of a person. None of the lyrics give away too much ... a lot remains mysterious. Some hints can be found in the track “We Stood with Time”.

How to judge and have a final opinion on such a release. I own it since it came out and have listened to it over the course of years occasionally, but even after all this time it is a tricky thing to put the impressions gained from this piece of art has into words. As outlined in the paragraphs above, there is something schizophrenic about this output and these aspects appear on various levels. The following should not be understood as an excuse, but it sums up a lot of the history back succinctly and rather neatly: *L’art pour l’art*.

Arcane Sun's debut is a potpourri of ideas thrown together, something that exists for its own sake and reflects the progression of the band over the years quite neatly: a steady and continuous evolution but never reaching a definite and characteristic sound or concept. Evolution and a breaking out of the barriers of their own cultural environment. How wonderful the sun seems to be from below the surface of our small dust ball. The **Arcane Sun** is a place unreachable, a concept impossible to boil down and how strange it is that the band had to call it quits so soon thereafter. Like Icarus they reached for the sky but were brought down on the earth ground all too soon again. It would have been interesting to hear the next chapter of their story ... their “sundrenched” wanderings.

Fade is an incomplete album ... and nothing more.

Available here:

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/arcane-sun-arcane-sun-1998>

Interlude III

The debut album had been received quite positively in various outlets when it was released. Also throughout the Internet there are only – I could not trace a negative one – positive reviews and no bashing or ridiculing. Somehow this is a curious thing, considering the strange nature of the output. Maybe the band was able to hit the right tone at that time and remains in the eyes of the metal community as an obscure but definitely ambitious band from Ireland, whose luck faded all too soon. Yes, a second album was not meant to be. **Ars Metalli** closed down all of a sudden and with it all chances to see another chapter in the ever changing concept of the Irish musicians.

These had not been lazy or enjoyed some kind of rock stardom. They pursued on a path to push their ideas even further and some amount of insight can be gathered from the release of the still unfinished output Fade (a Soundtrack for the Arcane). The problems with this piece of art are discussed in the review, so it is unnecessary to spoil some of it right now. Nevertheless, one warning: all has changed ... again. Nothing has remained, a lot of shifted, had been turned around. This is no second part of the debut, it is nothing that would continue from another earlier point, this is another daring attempt to break the barrier of conventionality. Whether they would have been able to achieve such a goal is an open question, but it is already possible to get some insights into the concept the band had in mind back then.

Aside from that, a lot of things happened around and between the two main outputs of **Arcane Sun** in the Irish metal scene. As can be seen from the graph on page 19 it was after the year 2000 that the music really

started to grab on and spread on a larger degree. The latest downturn is nothing particularly astonishing as it can be found through most of the metal scene right now – I do graphs on that subject and they reflect that trend. A quick search at the Metal Archives reveals some prominent names with releases during that period: **Primordial**, **Mourning Beloveth**, **Abaddon Incarnate**, **Mael Mórdha**, **Geasa**, **Cruachan** ... and a good amount of demos ... and a bit of **Thin Lizzy** ... again.

The scene followed the larger worldwide trend and thanks to some successful band, was able to receive some considerable recognition outside of their island. Now back to the never fully completed piece of music for a while.

Arcane Sun – Fade (a Soundtrack for the Arcane) (2000 / unreleased)

The history of this release is a sad one and this has not only to do with **Arcane Sun** but with a couple of other bands as well. Their former label **Ars Metalli** went down the drain before their second output was able to see the light of day and completed. As of now it is still unreleased and the version used for this review has been provided by the Irish Metal Archives with permission from the band; the same is true of most of the other recordings.

When it comes to discussing 'Fade' two changes have to be highlighted: the use of samples and a general drift in the concept. The aspect of the former is not completely new to the concept, because on the sole demo of **Misanthropy** as well as on the first **Fifth Dominion** one such made already a small appearance – each time with a bit too much of a cliché. Considering the scale of this facet on **Arcane Sun**'s second output these prior example pale in comparison. Every track on Fade has a sample ... and the last track comes with even two of them. They help to establish a strange focal point at the opening and with each new composition the listener is taken out of the realm of the music for a short period of time.

Do you know the opening sample of the first piece? Are you familiar with the movie from which it had been taken? Being actually aware of it, the first spin of this release was marked with expectations nearly impossible to match. "Pi", not to be confused with the novel "The Life of Pi" and its recent adaptation, is the source and those who have taken the trip of 'enjoying' it completely will agree on its peculiarity, absurdity and strangeness. But it seems the band used it because it offers them with a reference to their name as well as foreshadowing of a rebellious spirit; something commonly associated with young and 'fresh' bands. The following presents the list and references of all samples:

<u>Line-up:</u> Mark Higgins - Drums Feargal Flannery - Guitars, Bass, Keyboards Paul Kearns - Vocals

1: "When I was a little kid my mother told me not to stare into the sun. So once when I was six I did."

Pi – <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0138704/quotes>

2: "Nothing tells memories from ordinary moments. Only afterwards do they claim remembrance on account of their scars."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_jetée

3: "Pues el delito mayor del hombre es haber nacido. The worst mistake is to have been born in the first place."

The Spanish part is from Pedro Calderón de la Barca, while the narration is by William S. Burroughs. The source of it all is unknown though. Could be a movie, could be a recording.

4: "What we see and what we seem are but a dream...."

Picnic at Hanging Rock – <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0073540/quotes>

5: "The problem in the past has been the man turning us against one another... Can you dig it? Can you dig it?" (Note: edited by the band)

The Warriors – <http://www.imdb.com/character/ch0060105/quotes>

6: "I'm afraid, my mind is going. I can feel it, I'm afraid." (Note: edited by the band)

2001: A Space Odyssey – <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062622/quotes>

7: "Become yourself, then god and the devil don't matter."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meetings_with_Remarkable_Men

8: "Somehow, it was hotter then. ... The day was twenty-four hours long, but it seemed longer."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_Kill_a_Mockingbird

9: "Even a stopped clock gives the right time twice a day."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Withnail_and_I

10: "How ugly they are! Who'd ever believe they were once beautiful?"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Day's_Journey_into_Night_\(1962_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Day's_Journey_into_Night_(1962_film))

11: "I'm a HUMAN BEING, God damn it! My life has VALUE! So I want you to get up now. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs. I want you to get up right now and go to the window. Open it, and stick your head out, and yell, 'I'M AS MAD AS HELL, AND I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE!'"

Network – <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074958/quotes>

12: "Lord, I am tired. Sometimes I wonder if you really understand. Not that You mind the killin's. Yore Book is full of killin's. But there are things you do hate Lord: perfume-smellin' things, lacy things, things with curly hair."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Night_of_the_Hunter_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Night_of_the_Hunter_(film))

12: "The possibility of physical and mental collapse is now very real. No sympathy for the Devil, [...]. Buy the ticket, take the ride."

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas – <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120669/quotes>

Alternative versions:

3: "Exterminate all rational thought. That is the conclusion I have come to."

Naked Lunch – <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0102511/quotes>

10: "Take advantage of the sunshine before the fog comes back. ... Because I know it will."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Day's_Journey_into_Night_\(1962_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Day's_Journey_into_Night_(1962_film))

(see the other track 10)

A short but very important comment:

while doing the research for this long series about these three bands, I used a download a version of "Fade" that seems to have been uploaded a bit earlier than the online on the bandcamp entry. The difference? Only two samples actually; the ones listed above. As this release has never been completed in its entirety, these various versions reflect the attempts of the band to experiment and to set the right mood for the music. A definite opinion might be difficult to make in this regard, but the first version, which I had have a chance to give a try, seems to be more consistent in style and concept. What strikes as rather odd is the use of aggressive vocals at the beginning of "Fulfill" (second version), while also the slightly mocking tone in "Into Blindness II" (second version) feels kind of odd. The review is on the first part of the list presented above.

Back to the main topic:

This list is by no means superfluous. It helps to understand this release a bit better and to examine the development of the band in an appropriate kind of way. Even though some of the short samples have a rather pathetic touch – Endure, Dream Oceans – or try to come over as rather depressing – Into Blindness I –, their total share as well as they way they had been woven into the compositions, backfires and poses rather difficult questions.

Why is it that each of the tracks has to open with one but is rarely allowed to show one in a later part of a track?

How does the content of the sample and the track work together?

What are the benefits of these, compared to their absence?

A glance over the track list indicates the existence of several conceptual blocks: 2-5; 7-8; 9-11. This is merely some kind of speculation and with no lyrics at hand, there is not much to back this up. In some respect the track titles are able to give some kind of indication, but the task on how to place it all into a broader context remains a tricky thing indeed; at least from the perspective of a reviewer. Maybe all that follows should be taken with a grain of salt.

A constant aspect of the history of the band been the tendency to refuse to allow stagnation take on the concept, which as a result would have meant to copy the earlier concept over excess – something too many bands tend to do. No, these Irish musicians were, and this had been independent from the actual line-up, driven by an urge to reinvent the concept continuously. It is of no surprise therefore to find a good amount of changes between the two "major" outputs of **Arcane Sun**.

Instrumentals had been a part of the band's discography before – Vow of Silence on **Fifth Dominion's** Pain, Rage & Laughter –, but the scale and way in which these appear on “Fade” is unprecedented so far. Four have found a place among the tracks and their generally calm nature gives them a counterpoint, which, considering the removal of extreme metal elements from band's concept, might lead to a rather ambiguous perception. Something that plays into this is the occasional Spanish touch of parts of the music. Yes, flamenco-style arrangements have been woven into music of a metal band. Maybe another release would have presented **Arcane Sun's** art with Klezmer influences or even with overtone singing.

This one change indicates another one: the melancholy of the previous days has been diminished in impact. Stylistically, the compositions have a rather playful touch and present a variety of influences as well as approaches. To reduce everything to the death or even doom metal, the two genres which all prior outputs have been associated with, is definitely misleading. Some parts of the album show references to (progressive) rock/metal, hard rock, thrash/death metal and some small hints to other genres as well. At times the listener is thrown from one genre into the next and the samples do their best to confuse the listener even more. It is difficult to point to something as constant – in sensu that it can be pointed towards as creating the basis for this recording, a red line so to speak. Similar to the debut, also the second instalment is rather perceived as a compilation than an ordinary album. As it had never been completed, it is difficult to speculate about how much of the current impression might have occurred in a finalized version.

The perhaps most curious composition on the album would be “Into Blindness III”. This has to do with the peculiar riff, which appears all of a sudden after a couple of minutes. It has something of the vibe of the debut release. It has a nice drive, a peculiar playfulness. It has something that grabs the listener immediately. Aside from this, when it comes to outstanding characteristics, then the solos need to be mentioned as well. Not only is the scale in which these appear is unprecedented, also the variety and conceptual width is definitely astonishing. Be it with e-guitars or acoustic ones, be it progressive metal inspired or rather jazzy, the Irish musicians deliver on a broad scale.

The clean vocals are there, the growls, the occasional intensity but aside from that a lot has seen a revamping. It feels like a different band had composed, arranged and recorded “Fade (a Soundtrack for the Arcane)”. Even though some nice moments can be found, it leaves the listener confused and puzzled once it is over. How is someone supposed to understand or interpret this variety of conflicting facets, samples and approaches?

Well, we will never know ... and this “final chord” feels somehow unsatisfactory.

Available here (with the tracks of the two versions):

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/arcane-sun-fade-unreleased-2000>

Closing comments:

Over twenty years ago it all had started. First with **Misanthropy**, then with the (two) instalment(s) of **Fifth Dominion** and finally with **Arcane Sun**. It is their debut album that seems to have stuck with a lot of people. The peculiar juxtapositions of contrasting facets, the welcome attempt to shy away from the cliché in terms of the lyrics and a conceptual breadth in terms of the music as well as in the song-writing that not many band will dare to try; especially not on a debut output. Sadly, the band had never been able to present their second output in a completed version, but at least it can be experienced in some way now and will not be buried under the dust of time. But it is difficult to actually place it somehow. Difficult to comprehend. The band ceased to be without having a chance to experience the rise in popularity of metal in Ireland; the boom that started with the year 2000.

Nostalgia has generally something pathetic and to contemplate about a theoretical additional album seems like a waste of energy. Maybe their second output “Fade” would have been a disaster. Maybe it had been too extravagant for the metal community and **Arcane Sun** would have called it quits thereafter anyway. This is just one of the possible scenarios and more can be constructed without much effort. Yet what good can come out of something like that? Nothing, I would say.

The metal scene in Ireland has changed a lot over the years and **Arcane Sun**, as well as the bands prior to it, have all been buried under the dust of the ages. As far as I could have made out, there have been no cover versions of any tracks from any of the three bands so far. Music with less artistic wit has won the race and has been able to reach out to the audiences in Ireland and abroad. Due to the shutdown of **Ars Metallii** a re-release is not likely to happen and the metal audience has to rely on downloads from Internet sites instead of some new version of the band's debut output.

For now, all outputs can be downloaded from the Irish Metal Archives and in case you never had a chance to give any of these three bands a try, then I would definitely recommend to do so.

Associated bands and post-Arcane Sun activities of the band members.

It is difficult to write about one band and merge the text about another in it. Personally, and maybe this is due to my German origin, I prefer it to be separated, clear and orderly. Therefore, at the end of the piece on **Misanthropy**, **Fifth Dominion** and **Arcane Sun**, some light is shed on bands and projects, some gone and some alive, in which members of any of these bands are or have been involved with. The focus is on rather unknown bands, while recent as well as established ones are left out for obvious purposes.

But first some words on what happened to the members of the last line-up:

Mark Higgins

According to the Metal Archives he had been active in several other bands: Riffmaster General, Syketh, Fireland, Amputheatre, Scourge.

Paul Kearns

Is active in the British epic doom band Solstice right now.

Feargal Flannery

He had been one of the founding members of Primordial, but joined Fifth Dominion for their Towards Elysium output and remained with the band until they called it quits. In an interview for the Fitted Kitchen of the Living Damed (no. #2), the band described him as the wonderboy of the debut release, who had done almost everything on it.

Joe Haughey

He never participated on any recording.

Other members for Arcane Sun had been

Aaron Murphy (Inhumane, Karnayna, Kingdom), Emmet Rees (Lunar Gate), Brian Carroll (Fifth Dominion), Stephen Norton (Fifth Dominion, Misanthropy), Cory Sloan (Geasa, Legion of Wolves, Thy Sinister Bloom, Fifth Dominion, Post Mortem, Abaddon Incarnate, Afterlife)

Thy Sinister Bloom

This band had been mentioned in the reviews. Really strange music. Very calm, quite psychedelic, laid back. There is something dreamy in the performance. Long compositions do their best to increase this impression. Interestingly, they are still active but have spread only a few outputs so far. All can be downloaded from the bandcamp entry:

<http://thysinisterbloom.bandcamp.com/>

Further information can be found here:

<http://irish-metal.blogspot.ie/2012/01/thy-sinister-bloom.html>

Eden Obscured

Paul Kearns the vocalist of FD/AS had been in this band, a progressive metal one. Not much is known about them. The MA entry is rather empty and music seems to be not available; the MySpace entry is blank in this regard. One of the obscure bands from the Irish underground.

Post Mortem

I hate to repeat myself, but this is, as can be expected and please do not look overtly surprised, a short-lived project. One demo and then the band changed the name to "Muck Savage" and supposedly play a more hardcore influenced style; source Metal Archives / Irish Metal Archives. The music is a mixture between death and thrash metal with some nice solo parts. It reminds in the daringness to prove technical versatility on the debut demo by Misanthropy. Some nice parts are allowed to pop-up now and then ... but that was it. A strange release somehow. For a 1992 tape quite cool though.

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/post-mortem-primal-demo-1992>

Afterlife

Again ... one demo and they called it quits. "A Touch of Reality" is some intense and maybe even slightly brutal death metal. Powerful bass, rather slow and doomy and a sick atmosphere. It really drags you down into the depths of the death metal genre. No pleasantries are offered here ...

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/album/afterlife-touch-of-reality-demo-1993>

Sinister Demise

A brutal death metal band with two demos out (2003 + 2007), which is on hiatus right now. Not much to say beside that. MySpace does not work for me ... so, no discussion of their music.

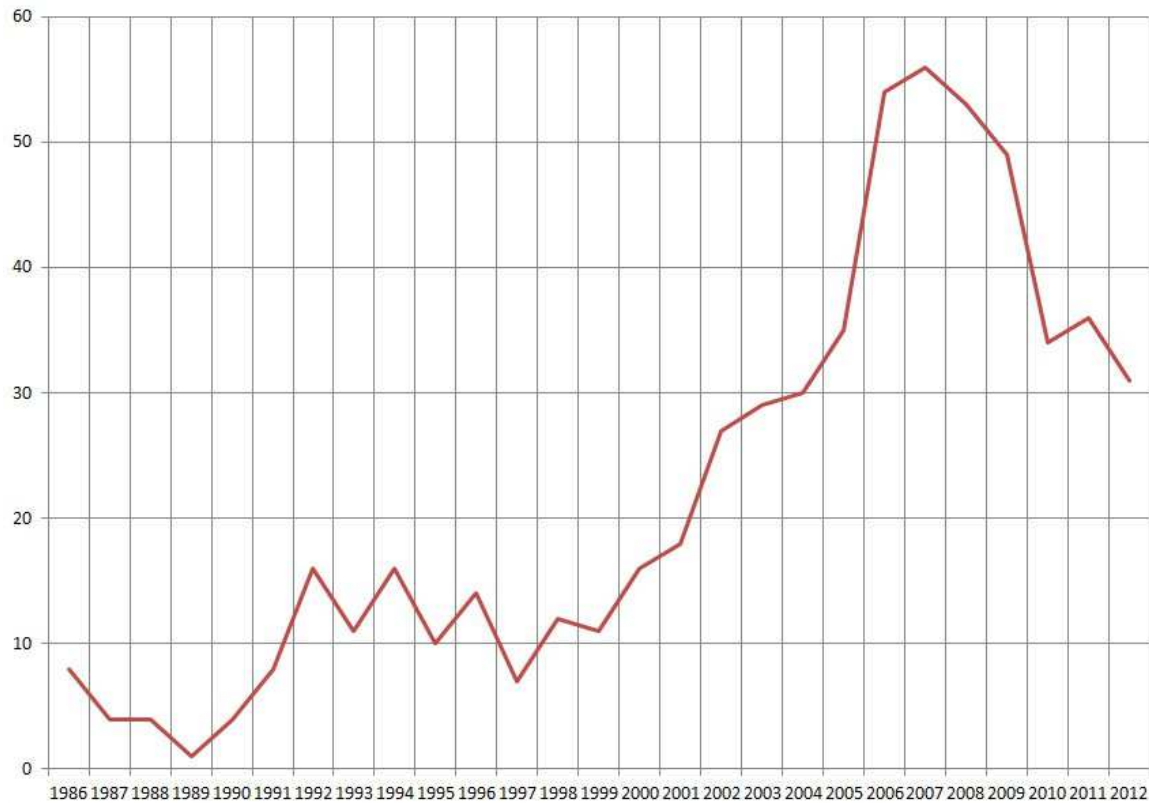
Lunar Gate

An ambient/black metal band from Dublin. They have several demos out already, but nothing has surfaced since 2003. This is underground stuff.

<http://www.irish-metal.blogspot.ie/2011/10/lunar-gate.html>

Evolution of the Irish metal scene:

Metal in Ireland



Sources:

Misanthropy

Souled Zine (interview)

Fifth Dominion

Deprived Zine #1 (interview)

Deprived Zine #2 (1994) 16/52 (biography)

Deprived Zine #2 (1994) 36/52 (live report)

Embryonic 2 - Ireland Scene Report (1993) (very short note)

Friendly Snare Distro & Scene Report (1993) (very short note)

Friendly Snare Distro & Scene Report (1994) (very short note)

Friendly Snare Distro & Scene Report (1996) (very short note)

Irish Metal Scene Report - FebMar 1993 (by PK)

The Oath Zine (interview)

Arcane Sun

Fitted Kitchen... #1 (review)

Fitted Kitchen... #2 (interview + Review)

Fitted Kitchen... #2 (Scene report)

Ireland Special, Moondance #4, 1998 (review)

Underground Empire Metal Megazine - Ausgabe XI (15.02.99)

Interviews

Telegraphy

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Well first off, for some reason or another, radio DJ's, podcasters and the like have had the notion that Telegraphy is a band (i.e. group of individual artists). To start things on the right foot, Telegraphy is not a band. Telegraphy is a moniker of an individual artist (Richard Sudney) please see my bio here <http://ionosonderec.webs.com/about.htm>

Anyways since I've conveyed myself as being a whinny snobby artist (I am not. I'm a really nice guy). I heard to many times as myself regarded as "A Band" and not Richard Sudney (a.k.a. Telegraphy).

Hi, My name is Richard Sudney. I'm an experimental electronic musician that goes under the moniker of Telegraphy. I create different genres of music through the use of computer software, analog hardware, micro samples of my own field recordings and vintage vacuum tube communications equipment. All of my material as of the time of this interview, is released under the Creative Commons. All of it is free listen to. I am also the sole proprietor and artist of Ionosonde Recordings which is a one artist netlabel. Yes, if you want things done right; do it yourself.

In 2005 I started to make music on my own. I've always done things on my own, even when I was young I was always upsetting some adult figure of authority by not doing things their way or blocking off guidance from them. I didn't start making electronic music to piss of an audience, I just wanted to prove to myself that I could make my own compositions. This met I had to learn about musical theory, software, mixing and mastering, graphic design (those graphic art college grads make a killing designing your album cover), webpage design (it's easy doing it with WYSIWYG software, but then again like to do things on my own terms) and all other ancillary marketing jobs record labels use. A self taught musician, a self made man. Maybe that's why I haven't made it in the music world, maybe because I lack credibility. 2005 I was heavily into netlabelism. Downloading free interesting music was a wonderful experience for me at the time. That's when I decided to get involved releasing my own music. My first release was under the moniker Monopole. The album was entitled "complex industrialism militarily" and was released on TLHOTRA Edition: 015 . "Complex industrialism militarily" is a simple 33 minute ambient sound scape that was completely created using the free GNU software Audacity. This ambient piece is very rudimentary in it's composition and sound and I'm ashamed that I even released it. Oh my god, what a terrible piece of sampled audio - Nyquist quantized - algorithmic compressed - binary file (MP3).

It is, and so it is, for whom to believe, in that you can see, that I shall say, which is to say, for me Richard Sudney (a.k.a Telegraphy), would be conducting this interview.

Thanks for doing an interview with me. It appears on your blog. I think we share a certain sentiment: print is dead. Why do you feel this way?

Hey, no problem. I'm very glad you've gave me this opportunity to speak. Thank you!

Now at this point, this is where I get into trouble with everyone whose involved in one way or another with free music, free words, and free images. So I'm going to make this fair. You. Yes, you out there in internet land downloading or streaming free material and that goes for myself included. We are the ones to blame for the demise and degradation of physical communicative goods. This thing we call the internet with all of it's nodes, servers, token rings, transmission protocols and pedophiles, has this uncanny why of transmitting information, sound and images at light speed over vasts distances and for a low introductory price it through's in a free low grade, low quality items of you choice. Choose between lossie, highly compressed jpg images or a MP3 file, all with the new active ingredient "quantization error". Hurry, supplies are limited on this once in a lifetime deal. So contact your local router today! Low quality material in the sense of the finish product can be transmitted faster through the internet. You can't for that matter transmit a hard bound leather back book through the internet nor a 33 rpm LP record. That will take some time. Time I don't have nor do you in your busy lives. So we sacrifice quality for speed. Speed that we need. At the same time of increasing speed we are nullifying any future productions of physical goods because there's simply no demand for them. Have you ever wondered why the worlds financial systems are crumbling. Lack of physical consumption? Maybe, but what I do know is that I can go to youtube and stream a whole album! Without paying anything or I can search online for free books!

Here in Detroit, Michigan's largest used book store is located in downtown. It's a huge four story ware house built in the 1920's. Any time during the week you can walk in there and see a distillate used book store. No one is interested in physical books any more. Which is very sad indeed. So we have this internet thing, we can access anything our mind desires for free. So why should I go outside to buy a newspaper in the freezing cold, combat all of the worlds hazards. I might slip and fall on the sidewalk, get robbed by an unexpected drug addict or get run over by a clown. All of that I have to go through just to buy a newspaper or I can just sit in the comfort of my own home, download my local newspapers classified listings, look for a job because the newspaper printing press plant where I used to work at closed down due to low demand of a physical paper(I'm just kidding. I don't work at a printing press. I'm just a plain old modest gardener).



What I'm trying to imply is that all of the disappearance of these physical communicative commodities, is due to the growth of a generation that uses the internet for all their needs and whom demands it to be available and free.

What kind of music, art or so do you cover in your blog? Are you active in this respect?

Well, <http://ionosonderec.blogspot.com/> is the information and happenings blog for ionsonde recordings. No other information is covered in this blog. So any information about upcoming releases, creative writings, photography, research papers or just rants and raves that I fell is artistically appropriate for ionsonde recordings.

All blog postings of <http://ionosonderec.blogspot.com/> I authored. And yes you inquisitive one staring at your mac's computer screen (you have to much money) that from my "apparent" writing skills that you might suggest yours truly to partaking in a few basic entry level college writing courses. Well....I did. And I was always threatened by my english professor to have his 14 year old son correct my papers. The term "blog" these days has changed and it conveys a webpage with aggregated links to other materials authored by someone else another then the owner of said website. I wanted to create a true blog where an author would write his or hers own postings, which would convey to the true meaning of a blog. So all blog postings are written souly about the activity's of Ionosonde Recordings and or Telegraphy's artistic endeavors. For instance, my latest posting which was about two black and white film photo's I've took of various buildings in Detroit. I explained their relevancy to a research paper I published in my blog concerning the occult nature of the street plan of downtown Detroit and how it is positioned to coincide with various astrological events. A urban version of Stonehenge if you will. So I pretty much post what ever my artistic mind desires.

The name Telegraphy sounds a bit antiquated these days, doesn't it? Why did you pick it? Just out of curiosity, did you ever happen to have a chance to transmit something via telegraph?

.....

Sorry folks my Vibroplex morse code key was feeling lonely.

If you think that you can just easily copy and paste that to any old online morse code decoder, go ahead but the message I just sent might be of a mystery to you. That's because only a seasoned morse code operator would understand it.

I'm a licensed Amateur Radio Operator and one of the requirements, back when I was first licensed, was to be proficient at morse code. Right now I can send and receive morse code at 30 words per minute. So you might think to your self and say, "that's why you chosen that name". Not so fast my little confused kunquats. Telegraphy is the first electronic form of communication. The internet would of never happened without these annoying dot's and dashes. Information on the internet travels in some what of a sophisticated form of FAX, in which FAX is a sophisticated variant of RTTY, and finally RTTY is based upon Telegraphy. So after this ridiculous history lesson given by me (your welcome), yes to answer your question, Telegraphy is a old and forgotten form of communicating so much so that it is no longer required in amateur radio and professional land and marine radio. That, my enlightened Ita palms is why I chosen the moniker Telegraphy. It's language that is almost forgotten. It has a bit of nostalgia, a sense of been lost but was always there. So who in their right mind would pick such a antiquated name for their act. I mean usually DJ's pick names like "DJ suppa bad ass" or "DJ big a\$\$ money". Now. Folks, how would you like if I produced the same music as I do, and at the same time had the moniker of "DJ captain booty rider", would you still listen?

You are from Detroit ... so, how does your band fit into this town? Can you write a bit about the scene and its current status. Would you mind naming some interesting bands from it?

Short answer: I don't fit in. I can't even fit into a good pair of jeans.

Long answer: Detroit has a bad habit, a habit of rejecting or looking the other way when it comes to local underground artist. This goes especially for electronic artist. Most Detroiters don't even know what a netlabel is or they don't even care enough to investigate. Up until about a year ago Ionosonde Recordings was the only netlabel from Detroit.

It is very hard to get your name out here because the electronic music market is so over saturated with DJ's. An experimental electronic artist such as myself, has no place here. Like that weirdo you used to know in highschool where he always kept to himself and was always reading computer manuals and hacker magazines (hey that was me) Only, and only until you get signed to a record label like Ghostly International or Detroit Techno Militia then you can enjoy the comfort of the Detroiters ears. But hey, I'm a very modest man, a little bit to modest, my music just isn't record label material. That's why I just give my work away.

To answer your question about the scene here in Detroit. I'm not sure weather your interested in the rock scene or the electronic music scene, even though this city has a strong scene ether way. I'm more adapt to the electronic scene.

The past two years saw a huge decrease in listener ship in the traditional electronic music styles of techno, noise, ambient, and minimal techno. This decrease was due in large to the breakthrough sub genera, dubstep. A new young generation of electronic music listeners stepped in, to take over from the aging rave scene crowd who are now in their 30's. This changing of the guards, was well noticed at Detroit's electronic music festival. Within a period of two years, you could see a change of a younger crowd at the festival whose taste was not of the rave scene audience that typically frequent at the event. What's more prevalent was the closure of a few landmark record stores which catered to the rave crowd.

"The Mugs" all around great Detroit band

"The Dirt Booms"

I really enjoyed the works of sound designer Rod Modell but he moved to Berlin I believe.

What is the status of Detroit today? Can you lay out how life is there and how it has changed over the years?

Life here is like a box of chocolates. You look at the box and on the cover is all of these wonderful looking pictures of the chocolate candy. Wow they look so GOOD! You open the box and look inside to a disappointment. The chocolates aren't what they seem to be. So after being disappointed, you willfully grab any piece. You cautiously bit into it. All of the sudden your taste buds come alive. "WOW", you say, "that was the most amazingly tasteful chocolate I've ever had.

Life here to the outsider looks bleak and miserable like when you opened up that box of chocolates, but to the person living that bleak and miserable life, they are having the most inspirational life experience you can't have anywhere else. With all of these hardships, it becomes a valuable learning experience. The word "experience" should be emphasized here because I can have so many different angles here then in no other place. To put it in better terms: If I can survive Detroit. I can survive anywhere on the planet.

I lived here all my life and in the past 10 years is when I could see the most significant changes. The east side of Detroit (where I live by) is the most hardest hit area in terms of economic devastation. 10 years ago where there used to be condensed urban communities, are now literally open fields. Wild life from the rural outskirts are starting to move in. Your seeing the ruralification of a major city in the U.S.

I work as a gardener for a wealthy municipality which is a suburb of Detroit, in fact it boarders Detroit's eastside. The road that boarders this mainly white upper middle class wealthy community with Detroit's devastated eastside, is called Alter Rd. It is considered to be Americas sharpest contrasting social economic racial boarder. You can literally walk from one side of Alter Rd. (with it's well taken care of middle class homes with new cars in the driveways) to the other side in Detroit and see empty burnt out houses, open fields, and crack heads. Not to say that this in a bad situation for me (remember, lessons learned in Detroit) but when ever I'm out on a job near this boarder, I can meet a large array of people in just a short span of time. One minute I'll talk about the weather to a business executive, the next minute I can converse about local political opinions with the homeless. What I'm saying is that no matter who I speak with, weather it be a noble or impoverished, I can always count on feeling the other persons Detroit love. I've been to other major cities in the U.S. and I never did feel right in those other places. People else where are cold and unwelcoming, you don't get this attitude in Detroit. Everybody here seems to be at the same level when it comes to hardships, and they all understand it. You just have to live here to understand Detroit Love.

A rather vague shot: do you know the book "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt" by Chris Hedges? Can something similar to what he described in it be found in Detroit as well?

Unfortunately I don't. BUT! Through the magic of Google I can know it in a few minutes.....wait, still searching.....ok hold on, I'm reading the summary.....now sending it through my biological computer.

Yes Detroit has been depleted of all of its industrial resources by means of corporate greed. To make more of a product cheaper in an attempt to gain better profits, has pushed the Detroit work force out of work. Not only was it corporate greed but the over zealous unions as well. This greed had outsourced the vast majority of jobs to a cheaper work force in second and third world countries. As a result, you see huge empty factories that are just now starting to deteriorate from the harsh Michigan weather.

In the past, I have done my fair share of urban exploring where I would visit these abandoned places to take photos and field recordings. The site of a vast empty industrial complex with all of its rusted out machinery, stillness and ear piercing quietness, in the middle of Detroit is defiantly a site to behold. The insides of these structures, weather beaten and raped by the infamous Detroit copper thieves, has its own surreal texture that you can't find in no other place.

What are the reasons that you play the music that you do? What inspired you and has this changed over the years? Is it a reflection of the life in Detroit?

I think any artist's music is directly inspired by their environment. For me, the environment is not Detroit itself but the small microcosm in which I live in. My home, the things in which I do and use in this place is the biggest motivator. I grew up here with the ability to explore all forms of music. My father was really only interested in big band jazz but he never forced us to listen only to big band jazz. My father has a collection of well over 2000 rare vinyl and 78 rpm big band records. I used to listen to them at a young age and I certainly got my fill in that genre of music. So guess that was part of my musical inspiration. As an adolescent I became more curious; death metal was a big thing in high school. I can remember making mixtapes with my older brother, we would bootleg everything from orchestral music to death metal. We would really bug the crap out of anybody riding around with us in my brother's car listening to Morbid Angel and then the next track would be Rimsky Korsakov. But it wasn't until I graduated that I became exposed to the rave scene, this was my first taste of electronic music.

Because of this ability to explore different styles of music (which can be heard in my music), I can be more open minded in terms of sound creation. I have a bad attention deficit problem when it comes to music, I can listen to everything and appreciate everything (for a while, I was into the genre of noise). Consequently, my music does not stick to one genre. Maybe that's why I'm not that well known, because people listen to a particular artist and follow them for the reason that they are predictable. I'm not a one genre artist, I'll change to different forms of music from one album to the next. Ambient, dubtechno, minimal, micro house, noise, electro acoustic, future tone, darkwave and experimental are the main genres I tend to gravitate to. Right now I've done a few deep dubtechno EP's and I've had my fill with that genre, so I'm moving onto the next thing (whatever that is).

How do you look back on your early attempts? Is it still possible for you to enjoy these?

No! Please don't remind me of those embarrassing first creations. For god sakes, why are you doing this? It's like the age old situations with your parents, showing off those baby pictures of you sitting in the bath tub, naked with your sister.

Can you lay out the general direction of your art? What are its core essences?

I've been told that my work is very hypnotic. Some of it is quite repetitive and some others are all over the board. I was influenced heavily by the repetitive nature of Detroit techno. Much of my work does seem to have a resemblance of that. An organic sounding techno was an idea I had when I first started. To use micro samples in a way as to invoke a natural almost biological sounding electronic music or for a lack of a better description, anti-electronic-electronic music.

As far as my long playing tracks, I was listening to an interview of a well known DJ, and what this DJ suggested for a good listenable set, is to have flawless transition from track to track. So I've experimented with that concept and what comes out of that are these 30 minute plus songs that seem to go on forever.

Your music has a certain amount of steadiness and flow. Why are such aspects important to you? How do you deal with counterpoints like noise for instance?

Again, going back to that interview with that certain DJ talking about flowing transitions. A compilation of an artist's material should have flow, like water. All of us are used to the concept of water flow, I mean we are made of that stuff. I'm not producing this stuff because a super star DJ told me so. On the contrary - I'm creating these long playing tracks for the sole purpose of taking the listener on a journey. Isn't that the reason why we listen to music in the first place? To take us away from whatever is bothering us.

Noise, noise.....ahh. Oh yea noise. Have you ever had the chance to lock yourself in a sound proof-room for a day? Well I haven't, but I'm sure any human would go insane not being able to hear anything other than themselves. No noise or the lack of it, is not natural. Our psychology depends on noise. Without it, our brain tends to believe that that sensory ability is gone. When that happens, our perception of reality becomes fragmented.

I do a lot of walking, and there's a daily ritual I have to go through that involves walking at the right time of day. Right now I'm almost up to four miles per day. During those four mile love handle burning walks, I listen to music on my mp3 player. The ear phones that I use on these walks attenuates my ambient surrounding noise (the birds singing, cars passing by, smoken hot girls calling me). I've noticed, that my ability to perceive reality with those ear phones on, is noticeably changed. Sometimes I have to walk without music just to become sane.

Ahhh....what were we talking about? Oh yea noise. The noise I use in my work can be related to when I was young, I would sometimes fall asleep with the shortwave radio on. And it always seems that when I was about to enter into a deep sleep, that's when the station I was listening to, would go off the air and what you would hear next was a rush of noise that would propel you into a deeper sleep. This noise sounded like you were listening into outer space. The sounds of the static, adjacent stations, and atmospheric sounds, all were playing among each other in a cosmic dance that hypothesizes you in such a way, like the uncanny ability the sound a car makes while going down the highway that puts you asleep. So I guess I was always inspired by these experiences and produced music with the same hypnotic sonic atmosphere.

Do you use vocals and samples? The ones that I listened to, did not have them.

If you've listened to my voice you can clearly understand why I don't use vocals. I just don't have the voice. Although I've tried using my own voice in one or two tracks, one of those that comes to mind is "To Own and Have" off of the Nocturnally Detroit EP.

Another album I made with my own vocals a few years ago, is entitled "Kednaj" which was created as a homage to the most reclusive outsider musician - Jandek. This album is by far my most bizarre. It was entirely recorded on a handheld cassette tape recorder. I recorded it in one take in my closet during one of Michigan's deep winter blizzards.

How do you record it, start the work on new compositions and all this stuff? Do you use a professional studio?

That's just like asking a Olympic gymnast how they do all of those flips and spins. I know how I did it, but to explain it would take me years. All I really can say is that all of the sounds you hear were made by me. I do not sample other artist sounds and I don't remix, everything is painstakingly put together by me.

A studio? Yes I do have my own. Professional? No

How do the pictures that you create and the music work together and what comes first?

I assume your talking about the cover art. Again, I do things on my own. It's better for me that way. To have complete editorial and artistic powers, prohibits the growth of grey hairs. From the photographs to the graphics, all of the cover art I create, always seems to come at the end of recording a album. By doing so, I at least try to create an image that will coincide with the true sonic feel of the album. Most of the time it doesn't work that well. Oh well, I guess that's the price you pay without having a graphics design college major on staff.

Do you also distribute your photographs for free and on the web? How do you see the discussion between analogue and digital photography? What preferences do you have?

Good god man, keep your voice down. Someone might hear you and think I just give away my photography.

I've been doing black and white photography a little longer than I have been doing electronic music. I'm self taught, I do my own processing and printing. Never have I sold any of my work (no one has ever offered to buy my photo's). Until that happens, I will always give my work away, and besides I don't think my photo's are artsy enough. I mean, my work has no people in them, their just photo's of buildings and landscapes with the rare appearance of a naked photographer here and there but I really don't think there's much to Ooo and Ahh about. I'm sure there's photographer's out there that want to slap me up-side the head, shake me about, and give me a good thrashing while screaming at the top of their voice's "Why are you giving your stuff away when you could make boo koo money?" Again, I'm modest.

Out of all the different opinions regarding analog vs. digital, I see it as a battle between a magician and a buddhist monk. Digital photography, you can manipulate images with the greatest of ease, creating new unheard of environments through digital smoke at mirrors, much like the magician. Where as analog photography captures images precisely as they are seen by the photographer and viewer, a total realization of reality if you will, much like what the buddhist monk tries to achieve in their lives. Now, the magician can only manipulate their environment, not ours. In other words the magician can saw his sexy assistant in half and not your girlfriend or wife (although sometimes you wish he could). Digital photography can only be manipulated and displayed properly in a digital environment; it's hard to display jpegs, GIFs, and flash media

properly in an analog environment. The buddhist monk on the other hand, spends his or her whole life meditating, praying, and sacrificing comfort just to realize total awareness of themselves and their environment. Analog photography is a slow process, it sacrifices easiness and it's a life long pursuit but the gains and benefits far exceeds digital.

That's my observation on this whole matter. So, what are my preferences? Well I have experimented with both digital and film photography. I took college courses in photoshop and I have used this medium extensively in conjunction with my netlabel exploits. In contrast, I've learned the art of film photography all on my own. Building my own dark room, learning how to take good photos and processing film, this was no easy undertaking in my pre-internet days. Learning all of this from outdated books I checked out at my local library. Looking back at this makes me wonder how I ever managed to do all of this without the internet. So I consider myself as being well-rounded in both worlds. If I was sent on assignment to explore and take photo's of Mars, a uncharted world, never seen before by us earthling, I would choose film.

Do you have an opinion on the Creative Commons?

This licensing system is great but it's far from perfect. Why should a creative person like me have to license my freely distributed work in order to obtain my authorship of said work? What I'm saying is that if there is no other way for an artist like myself to guaranty his or her's authorship for digital material, then what's stopping someone else from making money off of it. I made the damn piece; doesn't that qualify me as owner and author? If another person decides to use my freely distributed work in his or her's live DJ set (in which they're probably getting paid for) and it has my name on it, shouldn't I get paid as well? Not precisely. By the very fact that said work is licensed under the Creative Commons, which goes to say that it's a license that gives people the right to use (what is your creation is now mine). I just gave up my hard work away so someone else can benefit from it.

I'm not whining that I'm not getting paid for my work. I'm whining because people don't ask to use my work. Ask and you shall receive. Artist like to hear that others are interested in their work. If you like a song, let the artist know about it. They really appreciate it.

Why netlabels? You have one yourself (+ a defunct one). Can you write a bit about your experiences, the benefits and all this stuff. By the way, did you merely spread your own music on it or also releases from other composers?

Artist today are living in an amazing time period. Never before could an artist have at their disposal, online platforms available to a specific range of audiences. Not only that but an artist can create with ease, their own platform. And that's what I did. I created metal-oxide-malfunction (defunct) and ionsonde recordings originally to be an outlet of media art for people who are interested in experiment electronic music. It just so happens that both netlabels turned out to be one artist operations.

Both netlabel's I used as a vehicle to spread my music. Without them, a individual doesn't have that association of an artist to a bigger entity. If DJ Captain Booty Rider wasn't affiliated with any label or netlabel, and he was working on his own, sending you annoying Facebook wall posts about his new album "Rock rocka her-backa Roll", Would you be interested? An artist has some sort of credibility if their apart of something bigger then themselves. My own netlabel gave that extra credibility so I could advertized on my own. Every rollover of the download counter, was hard earned.

Ionosonde recordings came out on the same day metal-oxide-malfunction closed down. A continuation I like to think of ionosonde recordings. To demonstrate this continuity - The last release of metal-oxide-malfunction "Life Without..." is also the first release of ionosonde recordings. There was only ten releases on my first netlabel, I wanted to keep the release numbers down that low because I always thought of a netlabel as having not more then ten releases to it's name. By doing this, it gives the audience more of an opportunity to digests it's content. I don't know about you but when I came across one of these supper netlabel's having more then 200 releases or more, I get disconnected from the overall feel of that netlabel. To me it isn't a netlabel anymore, it's just another Archive.org where you can get lost and have no plan of where to go.

Right now Ionosonde recordings is up to it's 11th release. I don't plan on going much higher, maybe one or two more releases if I'm feeling frisky. For now it will die out an unheroic death, just like metal-oxide-malfunction did.....And then I'll start another.

Do you encourage people to start their own?

No! I forbid you from ever making such a stupid decision. For now on, your grounded for two weeks. No TV, no internet and no underground magazines for you. Now go to your room!

Seriously folks, theres a saturated internet out there with tons of netlabels. I have been doing this for three years now, in those years I only had one, count them, one submission to my netlabel. Unfortunately that submission just didn't have a good sound, great composition but not the sound I was looking for. The netlabel of today is operated like small businesses. You won't get anywhere in the netlabel scene running one as a hobby. You need to be active in the online community constantly, you need a good solid artist lineup, live events and some financial backing. All of these requirements are just to get you noticed.

This is just a hobby for me, I'm not in it for the girls..... Err, I mean I'm not in it for the fame or anything like that. I just got fed up with the idea of having my music on another netlabel that when released, it will be the flavor of the day and it will pass quickly and forgotten within a matter of days. Again as a self made person as I am, I wanted to see if I could create and run my own netlabel. It just so happens it turned out to be a one artist netlabel.

In Indonesia they have just started with the Creative Commons officially and they have a netlabel union. Your comment?

Welcome to socialism
(I'm being sarcastic)

For a country like this to join the rest of the creative world without having to suppress ones own work in fear of not being able to retain rights, is a step in the right direction (suppressive countries take note)

Do you browse the Internet Archive and the Free Music Archive for new stuff? I tend to get lost there... too much music.

It's amazing how those folks at the internet Archive manage to compile such an enormous amount of music into that one single 8-track.....wait, what? What was that? They use over 10 petabytes! Oh.

Seriously, when ever I'm browsing Archive.org, I become a like a lost child in the supermarket, desperately looking for the metaphoric mother of the album. I go to the netlabel forum to try and navigate through the congestion. Even though most of the time it's a drug overdose of music. So what I do is just stick to a few good netlabels and the music comes right to you.

Your comment on piracy in the music scene?

Again, our generation demands free music. You can see the recording industry flopping around like a chicken with it's head cut off, trying to deal with this generation of free music lovers. They might try to force proprietary media formats another than MP3 in a attempt to gain playback control. Another scenario which might happen, is that the recording industry will abandon the recording of music entirely and focus on live events. Of course this an extreme example but hey, the record and film industries has had a history of extreme manipulation as far as format playback control (VHS Bata, DVD Blue-ray, DAT CD, MP3 Ogg Vorbis MPEG1 MPEG4 AAC FLAC WAV)

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

I hate to burst your bubble but I really don't have any plans another then winning the lotto on May 20th of next year. I pretty much go for things blindly. It's hard for me to commit to a solid decision that I will be working on new material. I always will be creating music, it's in me to do that, I just do it spontaneously. When and where will I be doing that? (shoulders shrugged) Now, when do I win the lotto?

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

Buy my stuff? Err....I really never thought about that before. Well if it tickles your fancy, contact me and I'll accommodate you as best as I can. If you want a special CDr with a limited edition black and white photo, I can do that. If you want a video of me doing contortions underwater. For the right money, yes I can do that.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

<http://www.myspace.com/telegraphy>
<https://twitter.com/ionosonderecord>
<http://www.facebook.com/richard.sudney>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/59708571@N03/>

Some closing comments if you like

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to have you interview me. I know I sometimes come across as being sarcastic and funny when it isn't needed. And I apologize for that but when you live in a bad city such as Detroit, you need to have some humor to get through a melancholic city.

Bouq

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview and where are you from?

The band was started by myself; Muhannad Bursheh (a.k.a: Muhannad Asfatoun-Bursheh, and many years ago used to go by the names "Phexataa" or "Phex" in the metal scene, but not anymore). I'm from Amman, the capital city of Jordan.

Bouq is a one-man band that was started in 2001. It was known as "Phex" between 2001-2007 then the name changed to "Bouq".

Bouq might not be a term that many are familiar with, so why don't you translate it for us? What does it mean and in what language does it have its origins?

"Bouq" means blowing horn in classical Arabic - the literary language currently used by most of the inhabitants of the Levant, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and North Africa regardless of the wide ethnic, religious and cultural variation in that whole region.

Phex, would you mind giving some background information on this name as well, had been the band preceding Bouq, but why did you change the name? Is there a conceptual difference between these two projects?

"Phex" is the old name of the band - its not an older or different project - its the same project but with a changed name; the discography of Phex simply moved to Bouq. The conceptual differences are both musical and lyrical. Musically, during the days of Phex, the music was simpler groovy death metal, as can be heard on the debut album "Ascending from Transfixion". After changing the name, the style developed into a complex epic ancient themed black / death metal sound, as can be heard on the 2nd full-length album "Berserk".

The decision to change the name came due to the shift in the project's theme and sound - I wanted a more serious name that would fit in with the project's current and future musical and thematic directions. That was an important decision especially that the band turned from a side-project into my main focus.

Why do you play metal? What makes it stand out compared to other genres? Can you name a 'starting point' so to speak? According to the Metal Archives you work as a producer and it seems natural to ask whether you deal with metal bands as well?

I always find it hard to explain why. I guess I just got really attracted and completely fell in love with it. It is a well of emotions, wisdom, and thought, other than being very musically entrancing (in most cases). It stands out because it is not afraid to talk about subjects people normally overlook, or are afraid to delve into. Musically it is very special; it could be very technical, emotional, brutal, up-beat, symphonic, epic, folksy, glamorous, jazzy ...etc. Its different genres carry the collective sum of the experiences, elements and characteristics of most other kinds of music put together in an attractive method.

Yes, I'm also an audio engineer and a producer. I've worked with several local bands such as Bilocate, Exile, Spade, Soulbleed, Dragonrider... I sometimes also work on film sets as a Production Sound Mixer (location sound recordist) and as a post-production engineer.

How would you describe the music scene in your country? What are the predominant musical styles and are there collaborations between Western oriented genres and traditional ones?

There is a lot of talent, which if well cared for and if properly developed could become really something. There is usually a problem with the audience culture; music is not given the huge importance it should have, and people are quite indifferent about the artists - support usually comes depending on how many friends you have on Facebook and the amount of hours you spend spamming it about yourself - it is rarely given based on how good or bad your music actually is. Many people need to be more musically educated to have a proper critical opinion about local artists, which would help improve the local scenes. The biggest problem however lies with the lack of support artists receive, especially in the non-mainstream scenes; there are only a handful of interested supporting organizations or media entities - who usually only look for the trendy artists anyways.

The most predominant genres are of course TV pop music and nationalistic pop. There currently is a growing scene of a specific type of indie music, developed and shared by the countries of the Levant and Egypt.

There is collaboration between Western and Eastern genres definitely; it is present in almost all genres of music played in the region, from pop, to jazz, to metal.

Do you have certain centres for certain kinds of music? Is the country divided in different spots, with each having its own characteristics?

Yes and no. Amman for instance is a multi-cultural city, just like most capitals in the world. Music divisions are usually social rather than cultural. Usually, background and social level play a huge role in what kind of music people listen to. For example, more exposed and traveled people would have a bigger scope and pool of genres. What is good is that you can find every kind of music; Eastern and Western pop, jazz, hip-hop, folk, funk, electronic, classical, rock, metal and so on; generally though metal music is less accepted due to the many misconceptions surrounding it. Outside the capital, music becomes more oriented towards culture. In the south of the country you'd mostly find Bedouin music, while in the north you'd hear more Levantine oriented traditional music.

Is there a certain trend towards more mainstream oriented music and therefore even to global mass media visible?

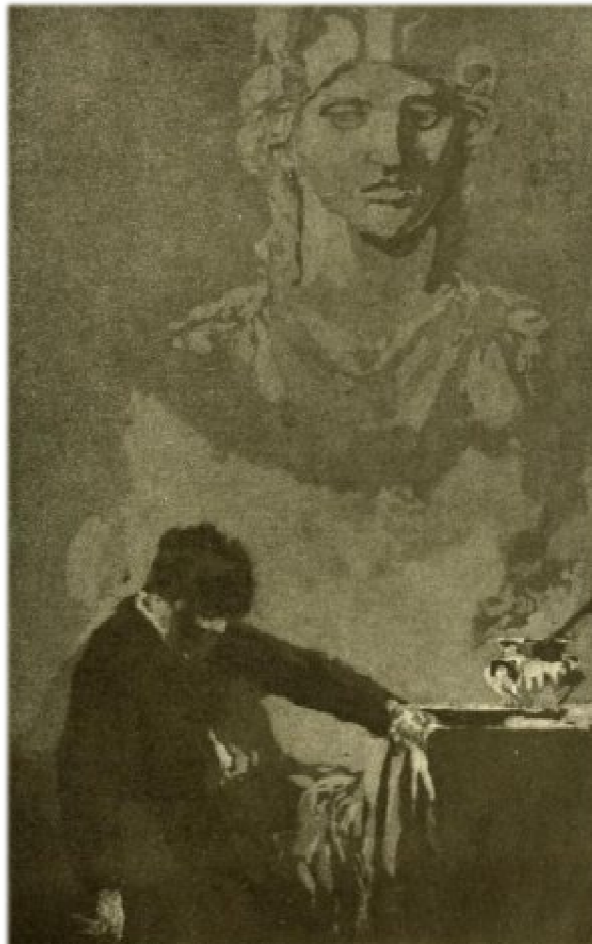
Yes, mostly towards regional and international pop, hip-hop / rap, techno, house and dance, as well as local folk and local nationalistic pop.

What about metal meets Middle Eastern music? Fragments can be discovered on numerous recordings already (from various bands from various countries), but rather on a small scale and not on a scale that would give the impression of being embraced wholeheartedly.

It is actually getting more and more present recently for Middle Eastern metal bands. I think the reason that its not fully incorporated yet is that bands don't usually survive that long in the region to develop a unique marker by incorporating Middle Eastern scales into metal without sounding imitative to the bands who have already done it, especially that bands usually start with influenced and passionate kids who just want to play, and they usually start with the stuff they already know, or the traditional way of playing a certain type of music. But again, it is getting more and more present, as bands are developing a certain regional identity.

How do the releases from Bouq as well as its predecessor Phex fit into this?

Middle Eastern music will be the main focus on the next Bouq album, which has not been the case before. The album which is currently in its pre-production stages will be musically focused towards incorporating Near Eastern scales into metal, and it will be quite different from both previous albums; the music will have a dominant Near Eastern touch, but it will retain the heavy and dark atmospheres found on the previous albums, however, there will be some real changes in the vocal styles. Thematically, it will be focused on the ancient history and mythology of the Near East, specifically that of the Levant and Mesopotamia. I come from a very rich heritage; Aramaean / Canaanite / Assyrian, so I would certainly love to incorporate that into the music of Bouq. Being also an adept researcher in history for many years helps a lot.



What do these both bands deal with lyrically and conceptually? Why did you pick elements from the Norse mythology for Berserk?

At the time when "Berserk" was being composed in 2007, Bouq was still a side-project, and my main band back then "Tyrant Throne" had adopted a Near Eastern theme for its music; so I decided that since Tyrant Throne has that, I'll create a couple of tracks on Bouq's 2nd album influenced by other cultures. I was for a long time interested in Norse culture, as well as barbarian and tribal cultures; that is why certain tracks on "Berserk" have these influences. Bouq became my main project only after the album was already completely composed, so the decision was made to shift the focus towards Near Eastern mythology and oriental influenced metal starting with the album the follows.

In what language would be the track 'Desrever Alumrof Ecnetsixe'?

Finally someone asks about that, haha... Actually its English, it just needs some brainstorming. If you flip it, or reverse it, it will become "Existence Formula Reversed". The idea behind the track is less mythological than Bouq's other tracks. It talks about how modern humans lost the spirituality, honesty and the wisdom possessed by our ancestors. Humanity has become corrupt, and the formula of existence has been reversed; we are morally and ethically going backwards instead of forwards, and many things are treated reversely.

The lyrics too are sung in reverse. I thought that it would be a cool idea, since the whole concept of the track is based on that, so the lyrics were initially written in proper English, then each sentence was reversed, and I practiced reading them backwards, and performed them like that on the recording - they were NOT reversed using production techniques. You can read the lyrics in unreversed English by displaying the lyrics page from the album booklet on a mirror, haha.

Here is an example from the first paragraph of the lyrics:

Lyrics as they're sung on the track (reversed)	Lyrics in proper un-reversed English
Nekorb saw sddo owt eht fo rettilps eht	The splitter of the two odds was broken
Nekasrof seulav lautirips lla	All spiritual values forsaken
Modsiw fo loot eht detresed sah nam	Man has deserted the tool of wisdom
Enihcam edam hself	Flesh made machine
Larutannu detnarg srewop dnm delebal	Labeled mind powers granted unnatural
Nam delurrevo enihcam	Machine overruled man

Judging from the information on your latest output Berserk you used some traditional instruments on it. Do you prefer to use the original instruments and avoid some electronic synthesized version of it? Can you present those used on recordings a bit?

If the real instruments are available and I can play them, or if I can get someone to perform them as a session member or a guest, then I definitely prefer the real ones, if not, then their synthesized forms will be the choice. We've reached a stage in music production technology where synthesized instruments are sounding so authentic, which helps a lot in boosting the production quality of synth based instruments or music, however, certainly using the real instruments would always be more suitable; at least psychologically. There are "epic" or a variety of supporting instruments used on the album "Berserk" rather than "traditional" ones; examples are timpani, flute, classical guitars, bowed bass guitar, tribal atmospheres, epic atmospheres... On the next album, Near Eastern traditional instruments will be used – could be real or synthesized.

Another aspect would be the language. A lot of bands use English and not Arabic for their music. You yourself follow this trend as well. Can you present an explanation for this?

Metal is generally regarded as an international form of music that penetrates borders. It is not only culture specific; it is a culture by itself. If you want to be part of the wider picture of metal, you'll have to sing in a tongue that is internationally regarded as an official communications language between people from different parts of the world. Almost all metal and rock bands around the world depend mainly on English, regardless where they come from. That of course does not prevent us as artists from using different languages or our own in our music. On Bouq's upcoming album, languages like Aramaic, Canaanite, and Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian) will be partly incorporated into the lyrics alongside English.

When it comes to finding metal music in your country, then how is this aspect being dealt with? Can someone find such music in specific venues? Do people bootleg and trade a lot?

In the past there were a couple of places that were specialized in selling metal music and merchandise, but not anymore. You can still find metal music in corporate music stores like Virgin, Prime Mega Store, and so on, but you'll only find the mainstream or ultra famous acts - I usually feed my music library from abroad. I guess people trade indeed; mp3's have made everything crazily easy. Also in the tape days there were lots of trading, plus the tape culture only died out here like 10 years ago, it did survive the CD onslaught for a fair amount of time, now, both are quite dead, I still use them though!

Can you write a bit about your two releases Ascending from Transfixion and Berserk? What kind of music do you play on these and how these differ from each other?

"Berserk" is the 2nd full-length album, composed at different intervals between 2007-2008. It was recorded in 2009 at my personal studios "The Phexagon Studio" and "HHP Studio (Horned Helmet Productions Studio); mixed and mastered by myself at HHP Studio; and got released in late 2010 by my personal label Horned Helmet Productions (a.k.a.: HHP). It represents a huge leap from Bouq's older style; the album introduces a unique dark / blackened sound of epic ancient themed metal. It is enriched with tribal and warrior-like atmospheres. The album is generally heavy, with a few technical parts and generally complex song structures.

"Ascending from Transfixion" is the debut album. Originally it was released in 2005 with the title "Transfixion" when the project was still named "Phex". In 2010 it was re-issued by HHP with the title "Ascending from Transfixion" under the project's current name "Bouq". The few differences between the issues are the album title, the artwork, a change to the title of track #4, as well as a cover of Bolt Thrower's "Powder Burns", which only appears on the original release; everything else is exactly the same. The album was composed between 2001 and 2002; the tracks were originally recorded for Phex's 2002 and 2003 demos, and then re-recorded in 2005 for the debut album. It was recorded at Sirenwave studio - mixed and mastered by Muhammad "sirenwave" Masri. Musically it is much simpler than "Berserk" and presents a groovy death / extreme metal sound.

Can you write something about the responses that you received on these? Were you able to reach out to fans outside of Jordan? What about the feedback you get from local fans?

The responses were great, especially for "Berserk" which received excellent reviews, and was featured on the website "Best Black Metal Albums" where it won the "Best Jordanian Album" title as well as "Editor's Choice" title. Bouq certainly gained a lot of fans from abroad; it actually sold more copies in Europe and North America than in the Middle East.

Can you play your music live and on stage? What about your other bands?

With the help of session members I was able to get the project on stage a couple of times. However, we haven't played in Jordan for quite some time. My other metal bands Tyrant Throne and Augury have also played several gigs in Jordan and abroad, but they're currently both on hold. Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

Yes, a third album for "Bouq" is now in preproduction stage, and again it will carry in a new sound for the project with it as explained in a previous question. I'm also planning to turn the project into a full band; I really miss playing in a band with a complete line-up, I'm currently looking for members, hopefully I'll be able to pull that up, and then "Bouq" can participate in festivals and gigs continually.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

The albums are available in both physical format, and in digital format through iTunes, Amazon, Napster, and Rhapsody. They can be bought from Bouq's official online shop easily using PayPal:

<http://www.bouq-band.com/bouq-shop/bouq-shop.htm>

<http://www.bouq-band.com>

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

<http://www.bouq-band.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/bouqband>

<http://www.reverbnation.com/bouq>

<http://www.soundcloud.com/bouqband>

<http://www.myspace.com/bouqband>

contact@bouq-band.com

label@hh-productions.com

Some closing comments if you like

I really urge the readers to try out Bouq's music, especially the latest album "Berserk"; it is very unique and won't disappoint. Also keep an eye on the updates of the band; the 3rd album should be something to look forward to.

I would also love it if the readers can check out my current side-project "Abohotho". It is an atmospheric ethnic Near Eastern music project, with ancient Near Eastern themes. The music is very atmospheric, spiritual and epic using mostly traditional Middle Eastern instruments. "Abohotho" is the west-Syriac (neo-Aramaic) word for "Ancestors".

Listen to Abohotho's music here: <http://www.reverbnation.com/Abohotho>

Join Abohotho's Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/Abohotho>

Thanks a lot for the interview!

Misty Morning

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Hello, first of all we'd like to thank you for the interview, we really appreciate this space you give us to talk about Misty Morning. We're a band from Italy and our HQ is in Rome even if I'm not living there at the moment. I'm Luca "El Brujo Luke" Moretti, I'm the singer, guitarist and composer of the band. I'm also handling most of the management aspects, press relations included, so I'm the one who's answering your questions.

The idea of the band Misty Morning started when the bass player Massimo "MaxBax" Vendittozzi and I were in high school and were playing in another band, back in 1995 in our hometown. After a couple of years some materials were already written when MaxBax moved to Rome. When I went there to University we kept going with the songs arrangements in my flat just the two of us 'cause we're still without a drummer. I graduated and went working in Japan for a while (I'm graduated in Japanese Culture and Literature). When I came back we realized that 10 years had passed from our idea and we'd not found a drummer yet. Fortunately a colleague of mine from my previous job in Japan, Francesco "Frankie Insulina" De Dominicis was quite interested in joining our band but he'd never sit on a drum. We started rehearsing the old songs and everything went very well. After that, The story so far in brief: We join the roman doom scene, we recorded our first EP, signed for a British label, toured a bit and two years ago Massimo "rejetto" Melina joined the band as keyboards player and electronics. So the band is a quartet now:

El Brujo Luke – Vocals and guitars
MaxBax – bass and backing vocals
Frankie Insulina – Drums
rejetto – electronics and keyboards

Interestingly, the Metal Archives lists the date of foundation as 1995, while your first release only saw the light of day in 2007. Why did it take you so long? Have you been active in other bands at that time?

As I said before, in 1995 we didn't have only the idea of the band but some songs already written and what you can listen to on our first release was composed in 1995. That's why many reviewers and audience said our first EP seemed old school, that's not because we'd have liked to recreate that sound or mood but simply because those songs were born in that period. That's a funny story about a Misties' song: Doom Saloon. When I was in Japan I found a band from Australia who released a cd entitled "Doom Saloon". "Damn! We have a song entitled Doom Saloon but it hasn't been recorded yet!" I thought about it and decided that was not a big deal, lots of bands call their songs and albums in the same way (Have you ever think about "Inferno" cds by Motorhead and Entombed, both released the same year!?!). After our first EP a reviewer took our attention about some similarities on the Doom Saloon song. "Jez, the Aussie band!" I thought. Wrong. The first riff of the first song on the first album of Unida was the same of Doom Saloon! I'd never heard about that band, I can't know everything, but that riff is identical indeed. Obviously I wrote the riff before them and I can prove it (I don't pretend they copied us: that's impossible) but the audience couldn't know that. So it's cool that an album may sound oldie but there's the other side of the coin on recording songs 10 years after you wrote them, during that period other bands could have your same ideas.

As I said, from 1995 to 2007 we didn't have a drummer and also I was busy with University and Japan. I was far away from Max so the band lived only in my room for a while waiting for more free time and a drummer of course. I didn't have time to join bands but Max played with his brother in a rock band, they recorded a demo with original material singed in Italian. They went also on a local tv but then disbanded.

Now everyone of us has his own personal music project. Frankie the drummer is also a dj for some clubs here in Rome, MaxBax has a rock project with songs singed in Italian and I have a couple of bands and an acoustic solo. By the way our main project is Misty Morning where we put a lot of efforts and try to keep it as professional as we can.



What had been the idea when you started the band and has this changed over the years?

Since day one there've been some major directions we've wanted to follow. Something's changed something has not but the ideas were pretty clear since the beginning.

We were fed up with the "show of technique", the fastest solo, the higher voice, the most difficult drum beat and everything like that just to show how good they are but without an inch of feeling or emotion. During those days music seemed a race, a championship. "My favourite guitar player is better than yours 'cause he can play faster" sort of thing. So we wanted to come back to the core. Only three BB King notes worth more than thousands notes of them, as someone said. Back to the roots, back to the songs meant also a plug'n'play way of thinking. We're fed up with massive use of effects, post-production, pc-tricks that every bands could be better than big names on cd but worst than monkeys on stage with. So we wanted only us, our instruments, our amps and what you listen to our cd is what you get on stage.

We also meant literally the statement "Back to the songs" as a return to the song-formula. We wanted songs you can sing, verse-chorus-verse and so on without strange intermissions, total instrumental or avant-garde noise crap. I love choruses, I love sing them I love getting excited with them.

We also wanted lyrics that worth to be read, with multiple layers of reading and interpretation. A lyric that make you think about it instead of "the first thing that came on my mind" writer's attitude. Words are important and I put a lot of efforts into lyrics. A cool story that carries a message I must discover inside of it, that's what I like to read, sing and let my listeners read and listen to.

We grew up and something changed over the years. When you're younger you're more extreme, then you learn that there's no black or white but mostly grey and you choose the shade you need. So we learnt the importance of technique to convey better our feeling (but not for the "championship"). The importance of effects and post-production to give a better product to customers (not to mystify). The importance of intermissions and instrumental breaks (but the chorus is always there!). By the way I'm still sure about the role of lyrics in our music (even if I write funny lyrics time to time)

So as you can read we're following the original directions but from a more mature perspective.

Does your band name has any particular background?

When we were thinking about the name of the band we wanted something linked to Sabbath that was our major influence at that time but we didn't like an album or a song's title, we prefer something that Sabbath fans may recognize, a name that could stand alone but remind Sabbath. We wanted also a name not only connected to Ozzy-era but linked to Dio-era too. So there was this first verse in "The Wizard" song and also the first on "Children of the sea" that caught our imagination: "Misty Morning" fitted very well with all the assumptions. And it really is 'cause people who are not Sabbath fans always ask us about our name and sometimes ask us if it's a tribute to Bob Marley. Another side of the coin on the way. We' not into reggae or Bob Marley stuff so we didn't imagine "Misty Morning" was a song of his. I've only listened to it recently. Others said it seems a name for an ambient band or similar 'cause the imagery around the mist and fog at the morning and it is also quite strange reading "Misty Morning band" and then listening to a thick sound, fuzzy with rocky voice. Fair enough.

Lately we've started to call us "The Misties" in informal situations and other people have headed us the same way. More straight, practical. No tribute, no hidden message or imagery, it doesn't mean much except us. Maybe it's time to change name too. We should hold a pool ahah.

You seem to have a stable line-up or? At least the entry at the Metal Archives does not show any changes in this respect. So, how did this happen or rather not happen?

Frankie, MaxBax and me, that's the original line-up. Then rejetto joined the band two years later. No changes, we've just added a member to get a better sound. No changes happened 'cause we don't need'em. We're ok, we all agree with our choices. We argue sometimes, but it's quite normal, everybody does. We are friends, we respect each other and everyone of us has his own private life and we've managed very well our duty towards the band till now. I don't know how long it'll last but why asking. There's a lot of bands with stable line-up and parting with someone is always a sad decision for both sides so I hope Misty Morning will be stable for a long time. When changes occur, we'll think about it.

How would you describe your music? What are its core essences?

This is a very hard question. I think that Misty Morning's music can be described like Heavy Rock, at the moment. In fact we started as a Doom Stoner band and while we were searching our musical dimension we added a lot of different influences: psych, prog, heavy metal, etc. The actual music we play can't be tag so easily so we like "heavy rock". We also try to be in the exact middle. I think that's because the different influences of the individual member. In the previous production of Misty Morning you can have an idea of what's happening. You could almost trace a path of what's going on our musical growing. Because it's a growing that we're talking about. Starting from "Cathedral"ish Martian Pope then Electric Wizard+psych "Jellotron" to rock+doom+prog+"Type O Negative"ish Saint Shroom we've kept adding layers of different styles to our music and we don't want to stop now. We like what we play and we think that there's a lot of people out there who want to listen to all of this style-intertwining. We change style but we always remain Misty Morning.

You know, when you can manage to play a lot of different styles, you become quite free from them, you have just your own unique style.

The next album will be another piece on this semi-unwitting route. Every songs are quite different from one another and they have their own nuances, there's the fast one, the psych one, the southern one, the doomy or the proggy but everything reflects what we are, every song is Misty Morning. The most important thing in this process is to not change too much. For example we don't become completely a prog or a metal band during the changes but we always maintain our identity. The exact middle that I was talking before. Heavy rock!

Why Stone Doom? Did some Italian bands influenced you in this respect or what sparked your interest in this type of music?

As I said before, Stoner Doom fitted very well our ideas when we started the band. Max and I were great Cathedral fans so that was the starting point. When I was in Rome we always attended doom concerts. That was the time when the roman doom bands were forming a proper scene, the first steps of what it's now, the first times of the "Stoned Hand of Doom" and other festivals in Rome before they became internationals.

Before I went to Rome, Cathedral was the main influence but for what concerned Italians who influenced us I can say that Paul Chain takes a big place on the list. His album "Alkahest" was of great inspiration, I've met him a couple of times and he's a great person too.

You know, I lived in a village and there wasn't internet nor record store so listening to Cathedral was just a big deal for us.

I've discovered a lot of great Italian doom bands and also that Italy had a great part in the forming doom scene worldwide now and in the past actually. But I've only discovered this lately, not when I started writing songs and forming the band. I'm very proud to be part of the Italian doom scene.

Can you write a bit about your releases? What kind of music do you play on each of them, how do they differ from each other etc.:

Mosquitos the Undead (Live album 2007)

A live recording of our third show during a festival in my area. Dated August the 18th, 2007. In that period we were rehearsing the songs for our first release and we had the chance to put that performance on cd. The tracklist consists of "Martian Pope", "Doom Saloon", "My Wicked Dream", "No Mood" and "Dance of Death" a cover of "Ballo in Fa# minore" an Italian folk song by Angelo Branduardi. This recording was very helpful 'cause in that period we were in contact with Analog Nation, a U.S. radio show that played the cd a lot and helped us to get lots of attentions from supporters and labels. The sound in this cd is plain Stoner Doom very similar to Cathedral's Carnival Bizarre. All the song but Dance of Death went on our self produced EP. The title is because the festival name, "Zanza Fest", that means "Mosquitos Fest", I just change it into a more creepy form.

Room o Doom (Demo 2007)

Same tracklist as Mosquitos but the recording was so raw that everything went so sludgy and dirty. It wasn't our intention, but lots of people loved it!

Firstly we recorded the rehearsals by ourself for our personal use but after we put those songs on myspace (ye olde myspace, now forgotten, but in that period there was only that!) lots of friends wanted the cd and I did the cover and started to sell few copies! We needed money to record the EP!

Martian Pope (EP 2008)

The real thing. Finally we had the money to enter the studio and in three days we recorded and mixed this EP. I presume you got the discography from Metal Archives that actually doesn't list the Martian Pope Deluxe Edition, the Doomanoid's remaster of our self produced EP. I'll talk about it later.

The first self produced Martian Pope had an handmade cover from a friend of ours and the tracklist is "Martian Pope", "Doom Saloon", "My Wicked Dream (the fabulous trip of mangustadrone in the land of cobra porn)", "No Mood (necromancer's ride)" and "Astrosarcophagus". Dated March the 15th, 2008. We finally had professional recording and we started to send this cd for reviews and deals. The funny fact is that actually the first person who bought this cd abroad was the guy who'd become our label boss 1 year later! The music we play here is quite stoner doom, a wide spectrum, from funeral doom to stoner rock. We played spontaneously and it was the first time Misties entered the studio so we had to learn a lot of things but I'm highly satisfied about this release. It went sold out quite fast and got great reception from media and audiences. Nice one!

Martian Pope (Deluxe Edition) (2009)

The first ever Doomanoid Records release. The reissue of our debut, but it's more than a simple reissue. Sometimes "reissues" are only to get some money but there's a lot of hard work on this. First of all we entered the studio and we already know the changes we wanted from the self-produced EP. The remix process was quite long 'cause we needed a more precise and defined sound. We also added keyboards in a couple of songs. Massimo Ruscitto, one of our sound engineer who's a jazz keyboardist, recorded all the keys parts. During that period we were on studio to record new materials too. For a long time we wanted to cover Black Sabbath's "The Wizard" but we hated to play the exact copy. I love bands who pay tribute to inspiring bands, but I prefer when a band reinterprets cover with their own style. Type o Negative were masters on it. So we gave our treatment to "The wizard". We're very proud of it 'cause finally that is our "The Wizard" and not a mere copy. We added the cover as a bonus track and the final master of the whole EP was great. We wanted a professional artwork too. By chance I discovered this great artist, Jason Juta, while I was surfing the net. He was the Star Wars RPG artist and had this great sketch in his portfolio: it was exactly what we imagine Martian Pope was. We worked with him to adjust some details but we wanted to maintain the sketch form, like a weird draft book of some lost astronaut. The cover is amazing, we love it.

The song are quite the same but we're really satisfied for the final result and how it sounds. There are only few copies left at the moment and there're some rumors about a Martian Pope's vinyl pressing by Doomanoid. We'll see!

Saint Shroom (Single 2011)

Another first for Misty Morning and Doomanoid records. This time is a vinyl. There's a long story behind it. Everything started with a split album idea together with a doom band from Rome that doesn't exist anymore. After they broke up we had to give up with the split album but we've already had the cover image from a great Italian art lab called Ver Eversum and we didn't want to throw that wonderful painting after all. I discover by chance an obscure book called "Sacred mushroom and the cross" with an incredible study about links between shroom cult and religions. I started writing a song about it and after long sessions in the rehearsal room we arranged this 12mins long suite. We also had a 10mins song left unreleased from the failed split album session. In that period reijetto joined the band. What a wonderful occasion to mark the changes within the band with a vinyl and its double sided feature! It was the best solution to show what Misties was on one side and what they will be on the other. We also considered the idea to release Saint Shroom as a single for the forthcoming album. The great changes in this release are most of all in the songwriting and in the way we play. I can say that it's more mature. Saint Shroom song is a long suite that cover a great spectrum of different styles that follow the lyrical moods. You may find doom, pure rock, dark ballad, prog and psych in it. I didn't impose any limits or restrictions when I wrote this song neither the band did while arranging it. I consider it our best song so far because it express what we are now: no musical restrictions to express our feelings.

On the other side, the song "Jellotron" represents what we was. A doom monolith with a long psychedelic coda. Obscure, suffocating doom metal. That doesn't mean we will never be doom but that we don't want to be only doom. There's a time for oppressive doom and there's a time for fast rock too. We don't want to limit our possibilities.

The Story So Far (Split 2012)

This is a split album with the Doomanoid records bands rooster. There's Iron Void, Groan, Vinum sabbatum, Mhonos and us. It was released for the Doomanoid records 3rd anniversary's celebration on this year's Halloween. It's already three years we're part of this big family. We're very happy about our label. They were tough years but we keep strong! There're our "Doom Saloon" and "Jellotron" on this split, and it's a great album to listen to together with the other bands, they're great!

A glance over your lyrics reveals that you try to avoid the all too common approaches – Saint Shroom single for instance. Is your music in a similar way? A bit daring, experimental, and free in style?

Absolutely right. Lyrics reflect music and viceversa.

I put a lot of efforts into lyrics and spend lots of time searching the right words. I love literature and there's always a better way to say something. Lyrics are very close to poetry after all. I want lyrics with figures of speech, full of images that show a feeling instead a common "description of the feeling". I want also lyrics with more than one layer of reading. I always try to write lyrics with an hidden message behind a good story, as to say "If you want to follow the story that's ok, but if you want to go deeper you're more than welcome". In a sentence: "lyrics that are worth a second reading". And lyrics always follow emotionally the music. Even the song's theme is very important and I spent a lot of time choosing it too. Saint Shroom, for example, was inspired by that book, as I said, "Sacred Mushroom and the cross" by John Allegro and I imagined this red line that links all the different cults and religions to the one and only Cult of Shroom as the book suggests. But at the end of the song I sing my own conclusion (I'll let readers find by their self) daring the common way of thinking nowadays.

Daring. You hit the word. I think we're daring, experimenting new approaches both in our music and lyrics. We could simply follow the route but we dared new directions and everything happened naturally so that's the way to follow. Sometimes there's not a word in English to express what I want to, and I've to coin some neologisms. It's the same with our music when sometimes we want to add something that no one would ever do. We try. Always. That's our identity. No pain, no gain as someone said.

What is the status of metal in Italy these days and how has the scene developed over the years?

I think it's quite the same. I may seem a bit provocative here but that's my point of view. In more than 15 years I've read tons of interviews to Italian metal bands and they always say that this status is going better and better. At their rate Italy should be the metal land. But truly it is not. I think it's a bitter sweet illusion. The only change is that metalheads are better connected to each other. This connection has brought us the illusion that we are more in number. Thanks to forums, mailing lists and social networks we feel increased but the only difference is that we are not alone anymore. Now we are not that lonely metalhead who waits his favourite monthly magazine and listens to those monthly couple of cds. Now we are a community with daily discussions and dozens of daily releases to listen to. But we are always the same ones. Over the years only minimum changes have occurred. For example, due to my job, I'm a private teacher, I've to deal with teenagers and they can stand to listen to metal now, they didn't think it's the devil's music anymore, didn't run for their lives. But most of the times they don't like it. They can stand to listen to it, but don't like it. It's a slight improvement, you know. And the worst thing is that I know more people who gave up listening to metal than people who started it. We're far from European standard. Media don't talk about metal, we have festivals but we didn't exist for media. I saw Wacken tv spot in Germany that are unthinkable in Italy. Sadly, Metal is still underground and the way to recognize its value is still long here in Italy. I don't want to close this answer with a sad note but I'm realistic. By the way there's a good thing at the end of the day: I think that now, thanks to these networks, the Italian scene with all of its great bands can reach bigger audiences and be part of a global metal scene as never before. That's a great improvement indeed.

How are you received by the Italian metal scene?

Italian metal scene seems to appreciate our releases. Lots of great reviews and fans who express their warmth throughout the net. Other bands invite us to play at their gigs and this is great 'cause we can feel to be part of a sort of family. With Saint Shroom and the new direction it seemed there's a change of audience. New fans arrived but maybe we've lost some old ones. I say "maybe" 'cause the one who doesn't like us anymore, he doesn't say, just gives up! We quite expected 'cause, you know, there are some radical metal heads (fortunately very few nowadays) who don't accept changes. We've just take account of this. Except a couple of bad reviews, the reception was enthusiast and we received appreciation from fans we didn't imagine, that's very good!

How well are concerts attained? What kind of fans to visit these?

Last year we played less than the standard average 'cause we're in album session. By the way we noticed a different trend on fans. The world economy's crisis affects concerts of course but it seems that the "gig-culture" is springing in Italy at least. Die-hard fans are always there but a new kind of person begins to attend concerts and appreciates live music. The most various kind of fans comes. From doomster to progster, from punk to gothic we receive appreciations from everyone. but the greatest thing is when you received it from people who don't have a particular tag and don't follow a precise kind of music but they just like rock. More and more people enjoy live music here in Italy, the real problem is the amount of tribute bands, but I think that with time people could like original music as the rest of European audience.

What about responses to your albums; local and abroad?

The responses are great. We receive good responses even now, after a year of almost silence, 'cause we're writing the new album, good reviews are published, engages for gigs and other things without any request from us, and that could mean something for sure. It means a lot, it means that audience likes our albums and the next ones could be amazing with a better promotion.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

As I said, we're in studio and the album is complete. We're working with our painter on the full length's cover and artworks but the songs are ready to be recorded. The album will be quite different from the previous stuff but we want to maintain the doom aspect too. Doom parts will be just more doom. But we want also to mix other style on it, that's the way we like it.

After this release we're planning an European tour already, we're in contact with bands and venues in U.K. and we hope to extend the tour in the rest of Europe. It'll be amazing to play in Russia and U.S. too. There's also a real gem in our next release that could help us to reach Japan, the country I know well, but I prefer not to reveal further detail about the album. Get in tune!

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

At gigs, we have all the merchandise of course. But if they're too far they can find our stuff on our big cartel space:

<http://mistymorning.bigcartel.com/>

If they're looking for our physical cds or vinyl, search "Misty Morning" on our label's big cartel:

<http://doomanoidrecords.bigcartel.com/>

For digital download (full of artworks and booklet) go to our bandcamp, with few money you can get all of our production in any formats:

<http://mistymorning.bandcamp.com/>

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

Our main internet headquarter is:

<http://www.mistymorning.it/>

our official website.

Official mail: info@mistymorning.it

Then we use daily facebook for news, photos, events. So if you've your fb profile, like us here:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Misty-Morning/28047488767>

We're on twitter (but don't tweet too much): <https://twitter.com/mistiesrock>

Youtube, with a lots of live videos:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/electricmoustache>

We're also on reverbnation: <http://www.reverbnation.com/mistymorning>

Myspace: <http://www.myspace.com/mistymorningdoom>

These are the website I remember, but I think there're more. They're too many!

Here is another ahah Soundcloud: http://soundcloud.com/misty_morning

Some closing comments if you like

First of all thank you for the interview. I'm really thankful to you 'cause I rarely have the opportunity to talk about Misties and what's behind this band. Our praise goes also to listeners who patiently wait our releases and support us. Finally I want to leave this message to the readers: support the underground music, labels and bands. It's just what other listeners did before us. All the big names in rock metal were underground music before they become famous and that happened only because listeners supported them. There're thousands of worth bands out there, give them the strength they deserve. Rock, Metal and Doom in particular have never been so flourishing, keep them alive!

Praise your Saint Shroom, Praise!

Luca.

Sproatly Smith

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

I'm Ian, I arrange and produce the albums. My right hand man is matt, we play the majority of the instruments. Sarah and Kate are the female vocalists, Mark plays double bass, Nic is on drums, and Kevin plays percussion. This 7 piece is the line up for live sets. I also use various local musicians to guest on the recordings. We started recording together in 2009.

Your band name needs some explanation. What does Sproatly Smith refer to? How does one have to understand these two words?

Smith is my surname, and Sproatly is the misspelt village where my grandparents lived in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Holderness. A sproat is a clearing in a wood.

On the bandcamp entry some of the members pose with masks. I have seen them again and again in terms of folk musicians. So, what is the idea behind using them?

I used the mask picture when we needed an image to put on to various internet sites, after the first album was recorded. It is a still photo from the English 70s film 'The Wicker Man'. It is not us dressed up. The film and it's soundtrack, and the folklore behind it, have been a big inspiration on our work.

I think the folk music/mask wearing enigma stems from it's association with pagan imagery,

Terrascope describes your music as "psychedelic folk". Can you elaborate a bit on this term and how can it be separated from the "ordinary" folk genre? How long has it been in existence?

Before the mid 60s, English folk music was governed by tradition. In the late 60s folk musicians began to experiment with different sounds and instrumentation that were becoming the vogue in mainstream rock and pop. Bands like The Incredible String Band and Donovan began playing more exotic instruments like sitar and saz. Other folk artists would mix different forms of music, e.g. jazz, rock, eastern style to produce new and innovative sounds. Some of them may have taken mind altering substances too.

We delve into that 60s psych folk genre, and incorporate it with some more modern sounds, to come up with our own.

Can you name some bands or albums, which can be used as a point of reference in this respect?

Comus, COB, Midwinter, Synanthesia are some of my favourite bands from that 60s folk period.

I find a lot of straight, commercial folk hard to listen to, even though it may be technically brilliant musicianship. I enjoy listening to music that has an edge. Syd Barrett is rarely described as Psych folk, but for me that's exactly what he was. I love the early albums issued on Bristol's Village Thing label.

There's been a resurgence of psych tinged folk in recent years, producing some wonderful music. The Owl Service, Sharron Kraus, Rapunzel and Sedayne, The Espers, Novemthree, Twinsistermoon, In Gowan Ring.

Not many will be familiar with your recordings, so why don't you lay out the history and concept of them? Do they differ from each other?

The Yew and the Hare:

this was our first album. I was learning to record music on pc software, and writing tunes on guitar. Put that together with listening to The Wicker Man soundtrack continuously, and this was the result.

Pixieled:

has 3 covers of 60s songs by Gwyddion Pendderwen, Clive Palmer, and a rare soundtrack from Pentangle. The general feel is of pagan folklore, myth and legend. Apparently good to listen to whilst giving birth!

Carols From Herefordshire:

this is based on the folk songs sourced by Herefordshire collector Ella Mary Leather, along with Vaughan Williams, in the early 1900s. Carols were not only for yuletide, there were carols for all through the year. They were songs that farm workers and travellers would sing in the fields. There are a couple of cheesy xmas carols on there too, which we did in a couple of nights. And a cover of Candlemas Carol by Steve Ashley, from his great album Stroll On.

The Minstrel's Grave:

has a couple of my songs based on Herefordshire folklore: mermaid of marden, blackthorn winter. There's a tune on there about a lady in Scotland tried for witchcraft, Isobel Goudie. Her incantation to turning herself into a hare, was picked up by June Tabor, and I've joined this with an Alex Harvey song about Isobel. The other songs on this LP are generally about death, including a cover by The Pretty Things, and soundtrack from the film 'The Innocents'.

Times Is 'N' Times Was:

is the new album. This is about the change over the last 100 years in farming methods and country lifestyles.



What do your lyrics deal with. A bit can be made out by listening to your music, but the layers make a penetration of all that goes on rather difficult. Do you print them in the booklets of your outputs?

No, the lyrics are not printed. Most songs are about English folklore, pagan/nature ideas, old traditions.

You provided me with a download of your latest output, The Minstrel's Grave, and I have to admit that it confuses me. When there is one aspect that I like to emphasize again and again, then it is consistency. Yet this output is a to and fro. Confusing. A potpourri of ideas. Do you prefer this chaos? Is this a core essence of the band's concept?

I agree that this album is quite varied. I wouldn't call it chaos. Our albums tend to grow organically; we don't want to be type cast too much. I guess there are a few different styles on there and I think that adds to its intrigue. Some people may not like all the songs; we want to give listeners an aural experience, which may not always be pleasurable. As someone said 'File Under: Uneasy Listening'

It is not sing-along music that you tend to offer. Something like telling small stories seems to closer to the truth. What are sources of inspiration in this respect? How does the audience at a live concert react to this? Your concept is nothing that would give an impression of being well adapted for a dance or some singing.

The live set is slightly different to the recorded sound. We have a drum kit, bongos and double bass, so some of the songs can be danced to, in a weird fashion, and even sinalongy! We still try to keep the off-centre essence of the Sproatly sound live. We use a sampler and play a selection of different instruments when possible.

We tend to play songs that fit in with season i.e. in the autumn we will play A Leaf Must Fall, from Pixieled

Do you play the music for yourself? What do you want the listener to take with him/her?

I do play it for myself, it's music that I would like to be listening to if I wasn't involved in it. I have to hear it many times when im mixing, and if I didn't like it I wouldn't do it. It's what we do, and if people happen to like it too, then that's a bonus, a big bonus.

What instruments do you use for your recordings and are you able to play your music in such a way on stage as well?

We use a large variety of instruments, and objects that produce interesting sounds. We use zithers, sitar, dulcimer, violins, various keyboards including a Hammond organ and a Roland Juno synth. Matt enjoys building musical contraptions from whatever bits and bobs we can find knocking about, we tend to be quite experimental in the studio to conjure up new sounds. No animals get hurt in the process though.

We have 'musical accidents' in the studio that I tend to use e.g. the descending wail on Bartonsham Meadows, which was the amp misbehaving. I also use samples, spoken word, and found sounds.

We do try to emulate the recordings live, with more beat behind it.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

The newest Ip Times Is 'N' Times Was is available to download from bandcamp, and will be available on vinyl next year from Folk Police Recordings, and at some point on cd.

We are working on an album that celebrates the works of Hereford metaphysical poet Thomas Traherne, which is quite different from other releases, and we should have a cd of re-mixes available soon.

We hope to play more live gigs; we have a great one coming up with Incredible String Band legend Robin Williamson in Cardiff on Feb 16th.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

The earlier albums were released on cdr by Roger at www.reverbworship.com. They were released in limited editions, but have been repressed a few times so should still be available.

The latest 2 albums are available from www.folkpolicerecordings.com/sproatly-smith

All recordings are available to download from sroatlysmith.bandcamp.com

And you can contact us at www.facebook.com/pages/spraotly-smith

Left Hand Cuts off the Right

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

My name is Robbie Judkins and my solo project name is Left Hand Cuts off the Right. I've been making and recording music since a very young age, but started taking my solo work more seriously in 2008 and adopted the Left Hand Cuts off the Right name from then on.

The name of your band might be interpreted in a political kind of way. Can you elaborate a bit on the background of this project and its name?

The name has a few meanings. Originally, I appropriated it from a hip-hop track by the Crooklyn Dodgers, featured on the Clockers soundtrack. Jeru The Damaja has the line "In Brooklyn right hand cuts off the left hand...", the line stuck with me and I was drawn to the idea of a pointless act of self-mutilation, what is there to gain from cutting off your own hands? Plus it's homage to my love of hip-hop. Although I have strong political opinions, I don't think they are explicitly apparent in my music, but I'm happy for it to be interpreted in a political way. Perhaps there are fascist elements in all of us and ultimately they must be cut off. Also, I'm left handed.

The music on Goma is rather repetitive, minimalist, calm and in respect also sedative. Are these facets characteristic for your music or is this output an exception.

I think this album is characteristic of my more minimalist, repetitive explorations. I've always been drawn to minimalist and trance-like music, the feeling of becoming lost and meditating through overtones, repeating patterns; drones and overtones have always fascinated me. It's also an active listening process too, that some of the music may not be instantly attractive, it's about changing your expectations and allowing your ears to search for curious sounds. There are minimalist elements in other areas of my music, but probably not as obvious as they are on 'Goma'.



The title Goma is not self-explanatory and would need an explanation. The last track has the title Piotrkowska; does it have to do with the street?

Goma in Japanese means seed. The music was made in a time when I was moving countries and symbolises a time when things were starting to change in my life. I was reading Haruki Murakami's 'Kafka on the Shore' at the time, one of the cats is called Goma, it's also a homage to that character too. When I lived in Lodz, Poland, I used to live on Piotrkowska street. I played the track to my friend and flatmate, Ania (who the record is dedicated too) and she suggested the track be called Piotrkowska, as she saw it as a soundtrack for the way home along the long street.

Is there a difference between the recorded and the performed music? Do you play the music on stage in a more free and maybe even drastic kind of way?

Yes there's a difference between my recorded and performed music. My performances are often a culmination of some of the ideas I've been working on at home, also including sounds I can only really explore in a live arena. I usually lay

out a plan for the performance, where I improvise within those sections, using samples and live performance techniques, which I know well. Sometimes these include a video I've been working on also. I experiment in different ways when recording, it simply allows me to multi-track and use software to manipulate sounds, which I don't use when performing. Also, my live performances are louder and noisier as I don't have to worry about annoying my neighbours.

What other releases do you have out and would you mind writing a bit about the music that can be found on it?

I have a few self-released CDRs, 'Menuthias', 'Chatter of Beggar's Teeth' and 'The Rat's Letter'. Menuthias is two live performances, with an emphasis on a thumb piano, that I later edited. The Chatter of Beggar's Teeth dealt with sine waves, digital feedback and circuit bent devices. The Rat's Letter was recorded in a week in winter, which around 3 weeks to edit and utilised an old cassette recorder, hiss, a saz and melodica. A 12" split with TCH, 'Preston/Lodz' is a homage to those cities and I used a lot of acoustic instrumentation, vinyl crackles and a collaboration with French vocalist, Cess Frangi. In previous years I was involved in a few releases with US noise act, Winters in Osaka. Privileged to Fail released my first cassette, 'A Love of Sickness' which was noisy and chaotic made with radio, piano, feedback and found sounds.

Must Die Records uses the following terms in a description about your band:

improvisation – circuit bending – found sounds – radio interference – field recordings – overtones – chance composition

Can you elaborate a bit on these and how they fit together with your art?

These are all techniques that I use. I'm also trying to develop into new areas. Improvisation is essential, whether it's with conventional instruments or digital and circuit bent devices, sometimes combining the two. I often improvise with other musicians and I develop ideas from there. Circuit bending and improvisation go hand-in-hand, the circuit bent sound source can be the lead when improvising, for example. Found sounds are objects and rubbish I find and collect, often in use with a contact mic. I'm fascinated by radio interference and also feels it compliments live performance well. When I tour a new signal or language or style of music can be found in the frequencies and provide endless possibilities. I collect field recordings from my travels and home area and often create a great contrast to the other sounds during a live performance, they seem to demand a visual interpretation. Overtones come from drones and closely related frequencies, they can be found more in my live performances. As mentioned, the use of radio and circuit bending fall well into a chance composition way of making music, the unpredictability and unknown outcomes.

Can you share with us some interesting band or recent releases from the London scene, if you do not mind?

Even though I've been in London just over a year, I still feel I'm finding my feet in this huge place. I'm finding new musicians, nights and spaces as I discover more, so by the time I've written this it maybe out of date. Raxil4 is particularly interesting, a dedicated and curious drone artist, we'll be working on collaborations in the future. Cementimental is a brutal and playful noise act, constantly trying and working on new sounds. Tasos Stamou is a hard working circuit bender and creates some brilliant collaborations and runs workshops.

The guys at Transient Constellations are always putting on great and varied nights, alongside Noise = Noise. The Hack Space in east London is a great hub of hackers, circuit benders and improvisers and have recently started doing performances nights alongside video performance artists too. I played Scaledown recently which is a long running night of music, poetry and comedy that welcomes anyone, it's a strong community with great support and is a great challenge for performers. Of course, Café Oto still puts on a great variety of acts.

Can you write about your involvement in other projects as well? What kind of films are you working on?

I often improvise with other musicians, including Raxil4 (Andrew Page), as mentioned. I've also collaborated with Jahiz, Naked Blood, Jon Aveyard and Winters in Osaka. This year, I completed a soundtrack for a short film, 10 Days Before Summer, by Stefanie Kolk, which was about a Japanese woman dealing with the tsunami while living in Holland. I have created videos for my performances, made through loops of Miécyslaw Waskowski's 'Somnambulicy' animation. I have also been working a documentary about a tour me and Tim Holehouse (TCH) took across Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. I have 5 hours of footage to condense to 20 minutes, so it's going to take some time. The soundtrack will include tracks from our record and back catalogue. In the future, I'll be working with Winters in Osaka again on some collaborations.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

There is a split cassette with Bad Suburban Nightmare, who also has a Must Die release, through Armed Within Movement Records. I will be working on a self-released cassette and CDR for the near future. Adam Jennings will be releasing some of my music next year too. I have a few concerts lined up, some solo and one as a collaboration. From January, I'm likely to be studying again which will have a direct link to my own music, but I maybe performing less.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

They can contact me directly, especially with the self-released stuff and we can work on something, I'm more than happy to do trades and share music freely. Also contact Must Die records for Goma and Armed Within Movement for the split cassette. I need to get round to distributing my music a bit better!

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

My email is Robbie.judkins@gmail.com.

I have a Soundcloud page, <http://www.soundcloud.com/lefthandcutsofftheright>, Tumblr, <http://www.lefthandcutsofftheright.tumblr.com> and there's a Facebook page. I can be contacted through those sites too.

Fasenuova

Translation by: Abo Doomster (Soulworm)

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

We are a duo consisting of Roberto Lobo and Ernesto Avelino, we are responding to this interview together. We are playing together since 1997. Goodbye goes temporarily from 1997 until 2006. Fasenuova from 2006 until the present.

Can you explain the background behind the name a bit? Does Fasenuova have an actual meaning?

Fasenuova is something we read in a text of Galileo Galilei in which he wrote about the phases of the planet Venus.

Actually, it is a continuation of the bands Hegemonía and Goodbye. Would you mind laying out the history of it all? How would you describe the differences between these bands? Why did you change the name?

As Goodbye, we were devoted exclusively to improvisation, as Fasenuova, we are dedicated to both improvisation and composition, that's why we change the name. Hegemonía was a previous project in which Ernesto was involved.

Why do you make music at all? How do you see your bands compared to others from the Spanish scene?

We do not think about it, we started to rehearse and play together and became part of our lives. Today, we are still enjoying it.

How would you describe the Spanish scene anyway? Can you name some interesting contemporary releases and bands?

Poor, abandoned, innocent, lost, sad. These are the adjectives that come to our minds to describe the present and all that we have lived in this "scene" over our lives as musicians. All work done in previous decades was in vain because there isn't a cultural environment that remained active so here the beginner always starts from the bottom without help or infrastructures.

How are (or have been) the responses to your band and art?

Art and music are the same thing for us. We do not distinguish between them. We consider ourselves artists working with musical language. But we also love to write, draw, installations, etc.

Can you write a bit about your releases, the music you play on it, the concept etc.

Angeldust / Fasenuova (2008)

It is unfortunate that the first full length we recorded as Fasenuova could not be fully released, for lack of means, and remained scattered in a few different editions. Most of the songs have entered this split. It was great to be known in other circles. We toured with Angel Dust. A great adventure!

Ella Está Llena De Gracia (2011)

Truco Espárrago, the label that David Von Rivers leads very cleverly, has opted to edit improvisations, rehearsals and experiments we recorded after years of work. This is the first record of a series of three.

Dao De Noize / Grassa Dato / Fasenuova - Voices From Prypiat (2011)

An amazing edition coordinated by David Von Rivers. We are very glad of this project, a tightly released disc.

A La Quinta Hoguera (2011)

The most sophisticated production we have done and the album that made us more known. It has obtained recognition by audiences and critics, and has opened many doors. Artistically, represents our creative maturity. It was a meticulous work both in sound and lyrics.

A Las Puertas Del Ruido (2012)

Second album of a trilogy released by Truco Espárrago dedicated to our improvisations and rehearsals that were stored safely in our HDDs.

Men Chak / Fasenuova - Concierto Avanzado (2012)

Split including a live concert where we played with Men Chak. It is a concert that represents our job just before starting the very long 2011/2012 tour.

Why does your music have such a wide array? What are the reasons for spreading it under one banner, instead of separate entities?

Under the name Fasenuova, by the meaning itself, we can make show all faces of our multiple personalities. At first we thought about renaming each project, but found it easier doing it this way and it seems entirely consistent with the idea of the band.

We express ourselves musically free and that's why we write different styles, but we do not care anyway. Any of the songs, whatever style they are, can stand for us alike.

What do the lyrics deal with? Not everyone will be able to understand Spanish or Catalan. Why don't you use English?

We always had in mind that to use a language our nearest audience understood was important. We are not native English speakers, for us it would be ridiculous. We believe that doing what we there are not barriers for anyone. For example, we like Grauzone and we never understood what they were saying.

If you have to name the core essences of Fasenuova's music, then what would these be?

We look for freedom and also make an art that comes from the idea, among others, of the transformation of reality, the world and space, through language, in this case musical language.

I have written a review on Ella Está Llena De Gracia and I was surprised to find out that some of your other outputs do not have this kind of noise and distortion. What is the fascination of noise for you? Do you listen to this genre and do you have some favourite releases or artists?

Originally we are a noise band. Influenced by many bands of the genre, but never being a one-genre-only group. Noise is another element in the color palette. This means that the noise and all its cultural and musical demonstrations has been very important for us in a way. Besides, who come to see us play knows that we are making it at full throttle. The bands that changed our lives and thinking were: Esplendor Geométrico, Throbbing Gristle, Suicide and Whitehouse.

How do the artworks and the music fit together? Especially Ella Está Llena De Gracia gives the impression of a rather ritualistic scene, which brings up the question, whether this aspect has found expression through the music in one way or another?

We live and play in a very ritualistic way. We do not brag about it but it is true. The cover which you refer is a work of David Von Rivers we liked to enclose the collection of songs that were published with the job. Playing together, making music is a ritual for us. It is not a routine because space transforms, it is another reality that appears and we are inside it.

You have made three split releases so far. Is this an important aspect for you? Do they offer music that would break away from your standard kind of way? When it comes to other part of the album, do these projects have to fulfil a certain role or category?

We are interested in the split format, it is very interesting to work with other artists, we believe it is essential, challenging, it's the kind of jobs that require more creative effort, and so we often accept offers like that.

Can you write a bit about your equipment? Has this changed over the years?

It has changed less than we would like. The lack of resources has been one of our problems. We have equipment from the beginning of our work and something that we've been buying over time. A mix of both.

As you play on stage as well, it might be interesting to know how you deal with this aspect. Do you play the music as on the albums, do you try to interpret them or do you even experiment on stage? Is there a difference in terms of the equipment, when compared with what you use for the recordings?

Playing live is essential to us and, indeed, until the publication of "A la quinta hoguera" in 2011 we were known only by our terrible performances. gigs are very different from albums in many things but we perform some of the songs as in the album. We include a lot of material that remains unreleased. These experiences have nothing to do with the recordings. In the studio we relied on our working tools but took advantage of available resources. Another synths, echos, compressors, etc..

Do you use visual elements as well? (Video clips, images, animations, or even installations and such?)

We use lighting in live performances. We are considering to use some pictures.

The band consists of two persons. How does this play out between you? Can you write something about the musical background of the persons, their role in the band, the influences in terms of the band's evolution and such?

We started this together long time ago, the roles have changed, have overlapped, evolved in myriad ways. Roberto Lobo basically does all the of synthesizers, samplers and sound, Ernesto Avelino, the rhythms, the vocals and the lyrics. But these roles have changed considerably, as we say, and over time we switched tasks a thousand times so is difficult to answer now. We are both musical illiterate, have no formal music education. Music flows through us in an ancient way.

Is there something you like to create in the mind of the listener? Is there something you like to see this person experience, endure?

Yes, our job is to take the listener's mind where we want and to introduce our music in your thoughts so it can't leave.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

We are preparing another full length work for "Discos Humeantes" these days. We are in production with Enrique Guisasola Kahn, who is the producer of "A la quinta hoguera".

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

<http://www.discoshumeantes.com>

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

twitter @fasenuova is our favorite

Contact the site is <http://www.discoshumeantes.com>.

Also you can hear all our work on the Internet at

http://freemusicarchive.org/music/Fasenuova/A_la_Quinta_Hoguera/

<http://fasenuova.bandcamp.com/>

<http://fasenuova1.bandcamp.com/album/eje-exc-ntrico-del-ritmo-espa-ol-o-el-nacimiento-de-la-m-sica-sincro-goodbye> .

Here's a video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fn_Yhks0zpM

Some closing comments if you like

We are thinking about embarking on a European tour. If things go well we hope that many have the opportunity see us live. See you soon!

Tóth Kína Hegyfalú

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Toth Kina Hegyfalú is duo from Hungary / Budapest, originally from Hegyfalú. We play in minimal-noise-experimental-weird style with instinctive, folk, tribal element (at the moment). Kinga Toth (vocal, lyrics, flute, keyboard) és Normal Gergely (guitar, keyboard)

The „Toth Kina Hegyfalú” is the Budapest, Hungary based duo of Kinga Toth (poet, illustrator / www.tothkinga.blogspot.com) and Gergely Normal. (painter / www.molnargergely.blogspot.com) „The pair has a strong performance art bent, with Gergely's sparse, often minimalist instrumentation serving as counterpoint and complement to Kinga's poetry, which takes the form of aggressive growls, and wails.” Written by Luke Carrell(www.internationaltapes.com)

Tóth Kína Hegyfalú, is your band name in Hungarian, the language of the country you are from? Does it have a special meaning?

It was a crazy mistake from the leader of a Hungarian venue, who invited us to play in a festival in Budapest. The festival called „Trash Festival”, which was a compilation of the weirdest Hungarian music and bands. We applied via post with a cd, where we wrote our address and name. We wanted to play under the name of „Brillenbagage” and „Orbondonor”. So the address was „Hegyfalú”, a Hungarian small village near the Austrian border, where we came from, and the sender was „Tóth Kinga” who is the singer of this project. The guys just read this and put on the flyers and the posters: Toth Kina Hegyfalú. Finally this mistake became our name. This name has also special meanings, it refers to our village (Hegyfalú), to our singer's name (Kinga) and Kína means China in Hungarian. It is rural but international and individual at the same time (Hereby we would like to thank Akos Banki and Vera Vida for the name)

Could you write a bit about the history of the band how it got started? Have the members been involved in other projects before or do they have side-projects at the moment?

This project is the fruit of our relationship. We live and work together as a couple, and our art works have also some common points. Kinga writes her poems and Gergely writes the music separated, but we also work together and experimentalise-improvise a lot. Sometimes we have special guest: friends join us for some noise or for a performance, like Grizzly616 with the bass guitar or Dr Audius Sparx with game boys, Hentes with the saxophon or Nemes Z. Márió with some Kassák-poems. On the first gigs even Kinga's sister had played the piano. But Tóth Kína Hegyfalú is a duo. Both of us played in the group „Talajmenti Agy” (tribal, improvisative punk) and this year Kinga sang first time as an extensive vocal in the „33 astral bodies” project in Bratislava, which she is going to continue next year and she is also joining Miroslav Tóth's Dunkeltherapy (dark, experimental, classical). We will start a funny project called „Dancefloor” with Gergely's brother, it will be crazy at all. Before TKH we had some bands like „Teachers and the Galeri” and „Orbondonor” (shitty punk rock), and after that came our first duo project, „Brillenbagage” (lo-fi pop-punk with heavy lyrics), where the visuality played the central role. For all of our songs we made a video, a home made one or an animation, but we never thought that we will perform these live. The Trash Festival in 2011 changed everything.



How does one have to imagine the collaboration? What is the starting point for your music?

First of all we just talk about some kind of issues, what is important for both of us. It is totally normal, and this is the starting point of our common work. After that we show each other our individual artworks, Kinga write texts, Gergely write musics, and the work together starts from this point very automatically. Kinga will do her cantillations with the recorded guitars, and edits her texts, shapes the melodies and the voices, sometimes just cuts off some unessential parts and keeps the essentials – very severely. Frequently we improvise on the stage, and we „find out” a song, what we develop later. Usually Kinga writes the lyrics separately, and Gergely the music also alone, but very often at a same place (because we live together) - we effect each other, it is a really dynamic process. So the creative work goes very naturally. The common stuff - ergo the TKH - is the connection between our artworks.

Can you write a bit about your equipment?

We have a cheap Fender Squier guitar, a Korg AX3g guitar-multieffect, and a Boss DS1 distortion-pedal, with an Alesis WildFire 30w amp, and a Digitech Jamman looper pedal, and an old and big Yamaha and a really small Casio synths from the 90's, and an ordinary flute to use in extraordinary way.

Your label writes the following:

"Inner rooms" - a fine piece of academical electronic music, compared by reviewers to Bartok's chamber music and Stockhausen's "Inori" and "Telemusik" cycles.

(<http://www.turbincarpus.net.ua/catalogue/tbc021.html>)

Is it possible to put this a bit more into perspective? What is this kind of the music the reviewers refer to and how do you see your band compared to these artists/projects? Are you even familiar with these?

Gergely: After we read this review, we listened some pieces by Stockhausen, but sorry to say, that we couldn't find to much similarity between his music and our noises. But we also realised, that we think more in a classical composing way, I mean, the songs are written as abstract structured pieces, sometimes the structure reminds us to a monumental orchestra piece. Anyway, Kinga works with a Slovak contemporary composer Miroslav Toth, furthermore she studied classical music and a long time ago she sang in a choir as well, I think she can understand the connections between us and the classical composer way more than me. So, there are some connections, but more in the structure or in a way of thinking about composing.

You do seem to have lyrics, but the voice is rarely pleasant or nice. In fact, putting the language aside for a moment, it is even difficult to make out something definite out of the performance of the vocalist. Why is that so? Why this amount of distortion? What is the place of the vocals in the concept?

Kinga: My vocal is a viable way to speak without censorship. It can be a kind of therapy at the same time for helping to leave my personal inhibitions, and I am able to „speak“ about my important essentials. It is not really easy, because it is not only a physical exercise but a psychological mission. We always listen and pay attention to each other on the stage, we need to be extremely open for the cooperation. Both of us need to allow each other to set loose the unnecessary and superficial world. If we reach a specified level, after that just our instincts can controll us, and we start the improvisation.

Gergely: Kinga experiments a lot with her voices or noises, and with the lyrics and words. She uses her stomach, mouth, pharynx as well to growl or scream. It is very interesting to use only just a human noise without exact words in a gig. We read somewhere, that this kind of heavy-death-metal vocal sounds remind our subliminal in our very deep instincts. (like the animals). There is an interesting reaction in our brain, when we hear a growl or a scream. Our brain starts to work much faster, like an adrenaline shock in a emergency situation, because this sounds are very similar than animal's voices whos run away in fear of death. Sometimes it works and effects, but the lyrics are highly important to start the performance in your brain.

What are the core elements of your art? What is Tóth Kína Hegyfalú's way of making music?

We just would like to „speak“ about our thoughts in bravely without fear. On the other hand we always try to improve our artistic devise to descend deeper and deeper into our subconscious with pattern of instinctive improvisations and open and direct words. We love making music, and we want to speak about important topics, that's why we play. We would like to discover new voices and noises, don't want to repeat ourselves or others. We don't like the narrow-minded people, and the preconceptions against the news. The most of music-subcultures are very exclusionary against the different sounding, but maybe the community of experimental-noise is quite open-minded with the weird musics and with musics without category and wellknown style and genre. We represent moods, and we present a weird world, what is a subjective reality for us. In this hidden part inside of us are our fears and frustrations. We just face people with some hided serious problems and taboos, for example domestic violence or child abuse. These are crime, but in Hungary totally accepted and allowed category, because there is no law for it. Our government has a very irritating answer for this question: „The family is sacred“, so at a sacred place, there can't be any problems. Honestly, Hungary is going back to the Middleage, it's not a joke. Anyway, we socialised with this wrong values, and people just forget to think about this, and they think, it is fine so. We only recall, that „hey man, if you hit your child, it's a crime“, and our country is assisting for that, of course.

Our opinion is, that it is never bad, if the different arts are not separated from each other, but they work together, it can be very usefull and successfull both for a artist and the audience. Definitely it helps to express ourselves a lot. We don't like, if a system is closed, especially the art must have to be the „exact freedom“, with no rules. You don't have to decide, what you are doing under the name of art, what you will paint or write, so you can pursue anything, what you want even all of them together – it's possible, because you are the boss.

Do all these facets differ between the recordings? Do Tollasbál or Falusi dolgozó show another interpretation in this regard?

All of our albums are different, we are also changing, hopefully improving. The falusi dolgozó (village worker) pointed the traditions and the dogmatic way of thinking or any other sci-fi events in the countryside. You can find some pop-elements there, but brutal lyrics and exaggeration, irony, kitsch and brutality. Tollasbál is harsh even in its music, no jokes left here. The style is not the most important, i can imagine that we will write rap-lyrics or childrensongs in the future, who knows and we don't mind, because we are open. If you have important something to say, you can find the suitable form for it very naturally. The Tollasbál is more direct, it is a place, where nightmares come to life. It is a very deep and a shocking self-confession.

Are these outputs still available? In case not, is there a chance to see a reprint at some point?

Gergely: Naturally we know well, that people don't buy cds so often, because they are very poor. Honestly we don't buy releases as often as well. There are people, or some small groups and communities, who are buying releases, which is a huge help for the record-labels. If some guys buy tapes for 5\$, therefore a label can work out the „business“ without financial loss. We gladly donate our discs or cassettes for our „fans“ free. Anyway, our last tape released in 50 pieces by SP Records USA, what is enough much in this kind of underground scene. All the tapes were recycled cassettes from the rubbish probably what is the cheapest way to release physical audio. I think it's a really sustainable mentality, otherwise they look very old-school and great, cool. By the way it was very fun, when I listened to one of TKH album, the beginning of the tape still contains couple of seconds from the originally music. It was a children song what just perfectly fits for the „Tollasbál“ album otherwise. Thanks really to Shaun Phelps, the leader of SP! I think, the cassettes are sold out. Maybe the next album, what we would like to publish, we would be happy to print and dub at least 100 pieces, but we don't know yet, where, so dear records and labels, feel free to write us, if you find this opportunity interesting.

We really like the Sp, because they are nice and this community works very well. SP is a recordlabel, and funzine-magazine also, and the guys are very successful to promote peripheral or underground musics on the net. Underground netlabels are also working together in the social networking, everyone is active really, the members write reviews, draw covers or just talk to each other like a family.

The design of “Inner rooms” is quite curious. Why did you take passages written by Kaiser Wilhelm II that deal with Bismark? (Yes, I actually looked this one up) Can you even elaborate on the “censoring” of certain passages?

We really like Andrii Dostlev's artworks, that's why we wanted to find him. The Turbinicarpus's album-covers are very specially shaped, and the materials are particular, too. When he said „yes I gladly desing for you“, we were extremely happy and we said like „feel free, whatever you want“. We clarified some details, and the result was a great artwork! He swrote us during the work „ I found a book in the junk-market, and I gonna use it also, and the cd will be a triangle one“ and we answered „its ok sure, sounds well“. Later we realised, that the book he mentioned was Otto von Bismarck's diary, what he used for the cd booklets. But Otto's ideology is nothing in common with us, except there was a Hungarian historical state long time ago, I mean the Austro-Hungarian Empire, oh yes and incidentally Kinga is a german teacher. Nothing else, maybe we should ask the producer.

We just love this design! Thanks to Andrii, and thanks to Arnaud Barbe from France also, who is the leader of Sirona Records. The Sirona net-released the „Inner Rooms“ in free-online. They always publish very different music from all of the world, like some gride-hardcore, and electro-trance, ambient-noise or freejazz and they regularly success thousands and thousands dowloadings per every artists, which is a big thing.

Do all of your releases come with such a peculiar design? Had the label – Turbinicarpus – been involved in the process of designing/creating it?

Generally we design our albumcovers, both of us pursue fine-art and digital-art as well, so it's not a problem for us. The Turbinicarpus was the first try to ask someone else. The cover-art is as important as the music on it. If people look at the cover-picture before listening, they mood can change, and maybe they can understand the music better in this frame of their minds. Visuality and sounds can work together well.

Is it important for you to have certain distinct visual aspects that can either support or create a counterpoint to the music? I know labels that try to do the contrary and limit this as much as possible.

As we mentioned above, the cover is important, but our music has to be enough strong without visuality as well. The cover or a video-projection is an added impulse to the main opus. If we will use an empty and meaningless picture for coverart, it will have a planned purpose, that's sure.

You have played live already. Do you perform you art similar to the way you do on the recordings or do you try to present some kind of interpretation?

Mostly, the live-recordings and the album recordings are very different in the duo of TKH, because we are a duo and the songs are recorded with 4-5 instruments and tracks at home. If we play in a festival or somewhere, it is always more aggressive than our homerecordings, because of our very minimal instrumentation and because of the other atmosphere, it is always exciting – even for us - what we can use for the performance. We purchased a looper pedal also to play much more tracks like a band with full sound.

So we came from the punk-rock through alternative-pop-rock through raw-aggressive metal. We think much more in complex orchestral structures with more people and instruments, more colorful music, with difficult rhythms. In the past we wanted to find others to play with, but we couldn't. So we are going to continue the experiment as a duo. It is a great challenge but this is the way to keep our authenticity.

Can you write a bit about your live experiences? How large have the crowds been? What kind of persons visit these?

The age of our audience is very different. For example, there are a lot of youngsters, who want to confront themselves and don't want to have fun, so they come to our gigs. Some of them want to discover their human borders or unknown parts of their personality or an other world or an other reality. Some of them just like those weird noises what tingling maybe, yes there are physical effects if the sound technician and the volume are enough good of course. Who knows exactly. The noise is a good hospice for weird and unappreciated people. We played for 10 people and for 150 as well, we played in some interesting festivals like in Hamburg, and in Praha, we played in a literary event on a Sunday afternoon, or in a brutal basement. Sometimes people just escape very quickly, but we have very strange but positive examples, like last time, when a 80 years old Dutch lady congratulated us.

What about responses? (concerts, albums)

There are some valuable writings from around the world, like this:

<http://yeahiknowitsucks.blog.com/2012/09/19/toth-kina-hegyfalu-tollasb%E0%B9%81I-a-live-spcs07/>

This is one of our favorite, but you can find more on our blogspot, under the label of critics. As we noticed, most people mention, that our performance is not a joke, and it is harsh and aggressive, despite of we are a nice couple anyway. We are waiting for a review about „inner rooms” on a literature website, which is an interesting way to get some different opinion about our stuff. Yes, the reactions are very different. We are happy, when people say „that was astounding and unpleasant and uncomfortable” because of the unusual experience. One of our mates said „it's very good if I got used to it”. – yes that's true, and if you survive, of course, it's cool!

Do you try to create a special atmosphere with distinct visual aspects? What about samples? None of these seem to appear on “Inner Rooms” do you use the on the other recordings or maybe live?

The project of the „BrillenBagage” had some video clips, and animations with a concrete story. The videos of „Inner rooms” are more abstract, like a travelling inside your mind. We definitely want to record more videos and keep using them in our concerts as a projecting behind us.

Is it possible for you to present some insights of the Hungarian music scene? From your perspective, what are interesting projects?

The Hungarian experimental-contemporary music is mostly in Budapest and maybe in two other cities. There are many events in the scene of punk and metal and rap etc., but no connection between each other, that's the problem, we think, what we mentioned before, there are narrowminded subcultures above. So Hungary has the „Havizaj” Festival, (Monthly Noise in English) and the Periferia Festival (Periphery), Open Minds, they are very open minded, you can do anything, what you want, you can play regularly for 20-30 people, but it's totally normal in the community of noise. And it is important to add Székárosi Endre's or Ladik Katalin's sound art and Gabor Toth's noise music. All the three of them are members of the older generation, but go with an incredible desire to experiment for it and open new projects, we think, this is what the younger people should learn from them.

Can you write a bit about the situation in Hungary right now. Glimpses of it penetrate the media barrier in Germany now and then, but most is generally ignored.

Hungary has an incredible bad political system nowadays, and it going to go worst than worst. This system looks like a democratic state but if you look at from close it is not. Huge amount of people are demonstrating on the streets, at the moment without any results. We are not pessimistic, don't think that, but it is very difficult to say any positive things, really. In our music and in the lyrics we talk about these problems, for example, our songs: „1-2-3” and „néni” are considered to be as a protest against domestic violence. And the far right is another big problem, so we keep going to be very loud to talk about these things and hope that the situation will change.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

We are working on our new album called „Zsúr” (in a very bad translation: „tea party” or „children party”), which is a bit different from our latest ones again - as usually. It will be a nice combination of harsh-noise, synth-pop, electro-pop, metal and children songs. Kinga wrote some horroristic rhymes from children songs for the lyrics. The album will be massive EP around 80 mins, and the atmosphere: a real sinister with heavy, and sometimes with melodic parts/subjects, maybe on CDs or on tapes or on vinyls, we are open for everything. And another record is coming out, a split with the German JavaDelle, we are releasing on this tape a live recording of the Serbian Sinobus Festival. Thanks Tim!

So follow the Tintimtonträger Records' new stuffs, and visit rarely the concerts of „Grime & Punishment" in Hamburg, and listen the FSK Radio on Mondays, the program called „Difficult Music for Difficult People". Great stuff! We played in Hamburg, Berlin, Subotica, Uden, Praha during this year, and on 6th of February we are going to play in Graz as well, and after that maybe in Vienna (this is not 100% yet), but we will play in the Hungarian bigger cities, and in Budapest of course.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff? How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

If you are interested the TKH musics, just write to the Shaun Phelps from the SP Recs, or write to JavaDelle from the Tintimtonträger, or write to Daniel Noel from the NoFutureRecordings, or to Andrii Dostlev from Turbincarpus Recs., Probably everything is sold out, but who knows, lets try! You can find us on the net, our albums are free at all to download them.

Toth Kina Hegyfalú:

www.tothkinahegyfalu.blogspot.com, www.tothkina.bandcamp.com, www.facebook.com/tothkinahegyfalu,
tothkina(at)gmail(dot)com,
www.youtube.com/user/gerillagreg,

Kinga's blog (poems, poemposters, pictures): www.tothkinga.blogspot.com,

Gergely's blog (visual art, fine art, graphics, paintings): www.molnargergely.blogspot.com,

Some closing comments if you like

Massive thanks for the opportunity! Greetings from Hungary!



Reviews

Animus – Poems for the Aching, Swords for the Infuriated (2005)

(Israel; Raw Black Metal)

6 Tracks (CD – Ars Magna Recordings) - _ _ _ (50:24)

<http://www.arsmagnarecordings.com/>

'Poems for the Aching, Swords for the Infuriated', the title of the debut album of the Israeli black metal band Animus seems to contain a riddle with a rather depressing undertone. While the former have to stick to the weapons of the mind, it is up to the latter to take up arms and do with it ... well, something, I guess. Why not the other way around? Interestingly the matters are actually more complicated. Slavoj Žižek likes to remind us on the following:

What this means is that, without shame, in conceiving art, we should return to Plato. Plato's reputation suffers because of his claim that poets should be thrown out of the city - a rather sensible advice, judging from my post-Yugoslav experience, where ethnic cleansing was prepared by poets' dangerous dreams (the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic being only one among them). If the West has the industrial-military complex, we in the ex-Yugoslavia had a poetic-military complex: the post-Yugoslav war was triggered by the explosive mixture of the poetic and the military component. So, from a Platonic standpoint, what does a poem about the holocaust do? It provides its "description without place": in (sic) renders the idea of holocaust.

(Source: <http://www.lacan.com/zizecology2.htm>)

Furthermore, revolutions have never been started from below, which in this respect would mean the working population. It always needed a spark from above. A spark from those who were contemplating about the injustices or wrongs of their times. By combining these two together, a dangerous precedent can be created, it can simmer around in the underground or it can spread after a while like wildfire. The violence of the infuriated might not lead to a shift in the state of a society, while the dreams of the aching can overturn the pillars on which everything rests; they can help to establish a counter narrative. Their pathological status, their suffering can create the basis for a lasting turmoil and terror. Poetry does not have to be a sedative per se. This misconception should be kept in the back of the head and be clarified whenever possible.

The Israeli band Animus has no lyrics printed in the album. It all remains mysterious, hidden and unknown. Like it is to some extent common in the black metal scene, the listener is prevented from thoroughly diving into the depths of the music, because one is not given the means to do so. Facets are kept out of sight, are impossible to grasp. This extreme art, by nature, prevents an understanding by the mere process of listening to it; not always but all too often. Animus are such a case. Extreme distortion and presumably a language (Hebrew?) that not many will be able to understand, confront the listener with a problem that is impossible to tackle. Furthermore, also the track titles give nothing away, because these would be nothing but numbers. L'art pour l'art (art for art's sake), I guess.

Aside from this aspect one has to ask: is this really metal? At what level of distortion has the barrier towards the noise genre seen or rather received a definite penetration? It is difficult to make out the riffs, thanks to as blurry, messy kind of way in which the guitars appear. Furthermore, similar to a band like Xasthur, also Animus stick to a pretty minimalist approach. The overall progression is often slow, concerted and bereft of sudden elements; an exception would be the short solo part in "V". A drum-computer ordeal takes place from nearly the first second onwards and as such, the dynamics are rather steady and limited. Yes, this programming sounds like it had been added last, when everything else had been completed already. Maybe this explains the unnecessary dominance of this element. It is one of the "miracles" of our time, how little effort is



invested on countless releases in this regard. Furthermore, whether or not a professional studio had been consulted for the recording can also be called into question. The bedroom has become a truly magical realm these days.

The most tiring aspect are the vocals. Why? Simply for one reason: their execution is pointless. Luckily humans need to breathe in order to be able to continue to speak or sing, because otherwise Animus might have been tempted to fill even the minor gaps of that exist on some of the tracks on this recording. Ne quid nimis – nothing in excess. When it comes to describing the performance, then it can only be labelled as ridiculous. Seriously, what does the band think they are able to create with this endless barrage of words and phrases in such a metallic kind of way? They cover up some of the general short-comings in the song writing, but at what cost one has to ask.

“Poems for the Aching, Swords for the Infuriated” sounds stuck. It exists in a certain niche, might feel comfortable with it, but is unable to move out of it, unless elements see an evolution to some other form of arrangement or state. Then, though, it would cease to be this strange and hardly entertaining piece of music. Compared with other bedroom attempts it is listenable and even enjoyable. Nevertheless, it wears off pretty fast and reaches the point, in which it becomes a strain, all too soon.

Let us return to the title. It is difficult to place it amongst the texts that have been recorded for this output. While the poems remain hidden and somehow under lock and key, the swords appear blunt and as a mockery; the material used for them has been pig iron, worn down by the ages.

Animus is none and nothing but sheer artistic devotion. No words, no musical notes – emotions.
(Source: rear of the inlay card)

Is it really possible to discuss narcissism away in this regard? And these words can also be interpreted in such a way as to be no apology but rather an insult. Facets of the art that attempt to obtrude the consciousness of the listener remain on a level on which they are mystical, incomprehensible. There are texts, or vocal parts or however it can be described properly. Yet the band goes not only to such lengths as to hide them through manipulations but to even acknowledge their existence in the booklet altogether. Moreover, the band gives hints on the actual content of the lyrics: Ecclesiastes 1, lines 2-18 (track two). And this exception stands in a stark contrast to the pretentious way in which the art is supposed to be understood or put into the wider context of black metal.

Messy ... it is a term that comes to the mind again and again while listening to the compositions. Inconclusive would be another way of describing it all. A daring attempt that failed to deliver on its promises.

Eczema – Rotten Like Life (1992)

(Hungary; Death Metal with various influences)
16 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) -_- (48:56)

It is the effort that counts, right? Obscure and forgotten tapes have to be appreciated out of a pathological fascination for the underdogs, those who had been unable to receive a recognition outside their local or some small scene, right? Well, the Internet has made things more easy and it is now possible to buy music from various places and even music of long gone bands hit the surface again.

Eczema's Rotten Like Life is strange, but not strange in the ordinary sense of the word. It is strange because one might associate something else, receives a certain amount of confirmation, only to see it crumble bit after bit – or rather track by track. While writing these lines the band appears stuffed into the death metal bag, but considering all the elements, facets and concepts on this recording, a lot of would be left unexplained and untouched.

First of all, this demo, and the same would be true of the band's first output “Psychalgia”, saw the light of day at a time in which the death metal scene was merely beginning to take shape in Hungary; a short glance over the search results at the Metal Archives reveals this. Band after band hit the surface, spread a demo and vanished again. A coming and going would be an adequate terminology for the atmosphere in this subgenre at that time. Moreover, considering that the first ever metal release happen to be Missió's 1982 “Egyszer Lent, Egyszer Fent”, Eczema's music appeared in a year in which the Hungarian scene marked the end of its first decade.

The name of the band points towards some grindcore concept, the title of the release would fit into the death metal genre, but a short glance over the track titles reveals something strange: depressiveness, sadness, contemplations. Confusingly, the band seems to deal with rather introspective topics, rather than some summoning of demons, praising of the dark side and whatnot. As, and I have checked this, the booklet of the release offers no insights on the texts and as it is difficult to understand something out of the growling/whispering of the vocalist, the actual content remains hidden and mysterious. Nevertheless, considering the consistency in which these topics appear again and again over the course of the album, it can at least be fathomed that this points more in the direction of “depressive death metal” than into the ordinary realm of the genre.

"The Solitary Multitude's Lament On Unhappiness", no kidding this is really the title of the opener, sets the stage for the strange mixture of elements that have miraculously found their way on this recording. It may not be too far-fetched to point to influences of darkwave music and these make a reappearance throughout the release in one way or another. A further confusing aspect are the instrumentals (1, 4, 6, 8, 9), which show the aforementioned influences on a considerable scale. These do mainly appear in the first half so to speak, while the second has actually none of them. "Beginning Of The Blues" (track number nine) – nomen est omen? – has a short growl and leads straight over to "In Eternal Bitterness I Sob Tragically". In case someone might suspect a division of the release in two parts, with different titles for each of them, then the release does not give away such a thing. Neither the booklet nor the tape itself point into this direction. Without some additional explanation, the reasons for these stark contrasts remain mysterious. Nevertheless, because the band provides two different types of music it seems best to discuss each of them separately.

Side 1 (1-8):

Some facets have already been discussed above, but these are merely some vague sketches. This first side is difficult to endure because of its general inconsistency in style. As listed above, the tracks 1, 4, 6, 8 are short instrumental interludes and they do not follow the death metal approach, which makes up a considerable proportion of the other compositions. They have the vibe of darkwave but are actually unable to get a melancholic or even depressive mood across. In fact, some sound even a bit cheerful. A depressive



black metal band of our days would waste no second on presenting to the listener how miserable life and this world is; yet Eczema do not even dare to do something similar.

The term "metal" should be interpreted rather freely when it comes the first part. While the vocals fit to the death metal genre, the riffs and arrangements meander between various types of approaches: doom, grindcore, rock, punk. "Lethargic-Eyed Psychic Tumors", for instance, is a strange hybrid of this large variety and the listener has to endure a confusing to and fro between these. All Is In Vain has less of this variation and is therefore more on the metal side, while "The Lifetrap Has Closed" would be the opposite in this respect.

In its own merits, the music is certainly interesting, but appears in a too confusing and especially fragmented kind of way as to be impressive or convincing. Especially the interludes are a strain somehow.

Side 2 (9-16):

After a short introduction – it is the second side of the tape by the way – the music heads into a direction that marks a stark contrast to the earlier performance. And has to do with the guitars. The

general direction is the same, but it all feels different. For some reason – maybe it an error on this particular tape – the strings have a strange sound. The manipulation, which added an abrasive touch to them, has a larger impact on this part of the album. It feels even less metal, less aggressive, less intense. Furthermore, the odd way in which the riffs appear are equally disturbing and for some some inexplicable reason the title track – this would be number fifteen – has the original sound from the first side again. All seems to be messed up a bit.

Generally:

A contrast to what is quite common in the metal scene as well as in the death metal one in particular is the absence of longer or rather coherent riff passages. There are bursts of the sort now and then, but these tend to crumble to bits again and again. A good example for this is: Lethargic-Eyed Psychic Tumors. Aspects like heaviness and aggressiveness are really misleading in terms of this demo output, because these two facets point in the wrong direction; especially when it comes to the second side of the tape.

The booklet is quite large and it is fascinating with its endless amount of drawings; a confusing mural if you like. Inverted crosses, nooses and unintelligible things, the like which "Morbid Angel" used for their "Altars of Madness" album. Eczema relied on black and white though, but it all comes professionally printed. The tape is a rather ordinary one, though.

The bottom line:

After countless attempts a review on this release has been done. The term rotten can be interpreted in a various amount of ways and none are too pleasant. Yet the title has some truth in it. This second and currently last release of the Hungarian band Eczema is anything but pleasant. A mixture of death metal, darkwave, grindcore, punk and rock can be found but in a way that is anything but conclusive. Target audience? References? Actually, after one has listened to the entire release, the level of surprise over the band's dismissal is not really high. Always keep in mind: where do you want to continue from such a daring approach?

Depressive death metal? Maybe this would have been an option for Eczema, but at the point at which Rotten Like Life had been brought into existence, this path might not have been feasible.

Wolf Fluorescence – Unwavering, Achronymous (2011)

(USA; Drone, Ambient, Noise)

2 Tracks (Tape – Jozik Records) -_-_- (21:33)

<https://www.facebook.com/wolffluorescence>, <http://wolf-fluorescence.bandcamp.com/>, <http://www.jozikrecords.net/>

Seems like a strange band name demands a strange title. Maybe it would otherwise indicate a certain lack in consequence. And speaking of consequence, the all too sudden switch in style, which contradicts the melody of the first minutes, might come as a surprise to some. Synths with a rather cheesy touch and an overall dominant sound, something impossible to ignore or shut out. It really comes as a relief once they are gone. Yet, what follows is strange and could hardly have been anticipated: a Silent Hill-like sadness.

A rather characteristic drone texture in the background – melancholic, metallic, distant, cold, hollow. It plays on and on ... minute after minute, while in the background some kind of distortion creates some kind of counterpoint: imagine something in the style of trying to keep the channel. Shorts bursts of noise, this is a proper description, but the more the music progresses the more elements are allowed to make an appearance.

Some instruments play short bursts of noises, manipulations pop-up, gaps in the overall sound, the intensity changes, has more facets of white noise ... and the mystical charm of the first side of the tape changes considerably on the second one. It does not become harsh or aggressive, but there is a certain amount of intensity in how the noise texture tends to dominate the music and covers the motive from the first side in the background. For some reason the band adds an equally pointless sound fragment at the end of the album. The listener might have anticipated a gentle fading out of it all, but Wolf Fluorescence had other things in mind. Whatever.

Remove the bad parts from the two tracks – can be done with Audacity without much effort – and you have mixture between melancholic drone and calm noise – to put it a bit too simple.

Note:

Limited to 60 copies.

Green Mistletoe – Forest Dweller (2007)

(USA; Folk, Experimental)

12 Tracks (CD – Little Somebody Records) -_-_- (30:07)

<http://littlesomebodyfamily.bandcamp.com/>

I am generally for taking release titles literally or at least use them as a first source of inspiration. When it comes to this band, then my comment is nothing but devastating. Forest Dweller is chaotic chaos without a clear structure or something that would it enjoyable, a rudimentary pretentious folk album whose lack of even the basic consistencies, makes it difficult to thoroughly enjoy it. The productions (!) swing to and fro; conceptual music approaches vary from track to track at times and so on and so forth. 'Forest Dweller' suggests a narcissistic backwardness, a refusal to deal with the modern world and its ongoing. It is what Henry David Thoreau wrote about in Walden.

Revealing is also the average length of the tracks: ø ~2:30; min. 1:33 – max. 4:37. Half of the compositions have less than two minutes to offer, while the longer ones rarely reach for the length of the longest one. In some respect it would be fair to state that the concept behind 'Green Mistletoe' has something of a punkish tendency; something which would be fine in case it all had been composed and arranged in a more sound way. Yet ... this is simply not the case.

It all is stuck on the level of sounding random, vague and without coherence. One example: 'Y Golwg' – a duett with a female vocalist by a fire site –, which is followed by '13 Firewoods' – odd manipulated male vocals (b-horror-movie) and the crackling of a fire – and 'Crosswise Cut The Apple In Two' – a strange juxtapositions of style and hollow vocals. 'Igwja Dher' the next track is actually quite interesting, but does not fit into what had been done before. A → B → C → D → ... etc. 'Forest Dweller' is a prime example on the importance of consistency and why bands should try to have a minimum level of it on their albums.

I can hardly recommend this release, which is a sad thing, because 'Little Somebody Records' is such a wonderful label. Their outputs are handmade, well crafted, nicely designed and often contain some interesting music. This CD seems to be an exemption, then. Well, it is possible to give it a try at bandcamp ... so, you do not have to spend your money blindly.

Note:

Available for stream on this page:

<http://littlesomebodyfamily.bandcamp.com/album/green-mistletoe-forest-dweller>

Brian Green – 112011 (2011)

(USA; Ambient, Drone, Noise)

2 Tracks (Tape – Jozik Records) -_-_- (29:50)

<http://seeyouinsleep.bandcamp.com/>, <http://www.jozikrecords.net/>

It is not binary; the one “2” spoils it all in some respect. Somehow it disrupts everything right from the start, prevent an impression of getting hold, letting it all unfold and setting the stage for some kind of concept. To put it plainly: there is no flow. Neither in the music, nor in the title. Stepping stones are all around and they prevent the listener from digesting the performance of 'Brian Green' in an easy kind of way.

Similar to the effect of the number, there are these odd noise effects, a random but constant disturbance, whose part does not allow the dreamy ambient texture to unfold its potential. In some respect it would be fair to state that the lofty melodies are “grounded” and are not allowed to spirit away. The listener is reminded on the dualism of one's existence. Impossible to deny, impossible to escape. Each cannot be without the other.

Two long tracks, each with a rather similar set of elements and characteristics, outrageous in terms of the minimalism and repetition, can be found on this tape. And despite the overall length of thirty minutes, it is never possible to get thoroughly immersed into the realm of dreams and fantasies. Strenuous, yes, this would be a proper term to describe the performance.

Note:

Limited to 60 copies

Oort Trio – Oort Trio (2012)

(Denmark; Experimental, Noise, Improvisation)

(CDr – Golem Tapes) -_-_- (39:02)

<http://golemtapes.blogspot.com/>

The band name is nearly a palindrome ... nearly. The music is also nearly normal on this output ... nearly. Well, there are no surprises in terms of the instrumentation: drums, guitars, a clarinet (according to the label's homepage) and some electronic equipment. Nothing that would be too astounding, confusing or such. Nevertheless, all these “generic” facets create together a strange experience, which spans nearly forty minutes.

The label writes the following:

The CD consists of one long untitled track of electric ambient freejazz moving from absolutely violent outbursts to deep calm atmospheres.

(<http://golemtapes.blogspot.de/2012/04/g12-oort-trio.html>)

Actually, this sums it up quite well. There is this vibe improvisation that is interspersed with surprisingly calm moments, which sound rather like a gathering of force or strength than a definite attempt of moving into a different realm. A juxtaposition of ideas rather than an alliance. Once the jazz has reached a certain momentum again, the music will progress on this kind of level, while the same can be said of the ambient parts. A flexible consistency so to speak. Like a pendulum, swinging to and fro, but never remaining in a certain fixed position.



And this lack in aggressiveness or rather willingness to bring the elements closer together and create therefore a more intense feeling of the contrasts, is what can be criticized. Oort Trio's is a nice release and quite confusing at times, but one might want to it all to be more daring, more extreme and also with more switches in the flow. Like a muted cosine curve the progression over time can be described. Towards the end a last hurrah, a final intense burst and it all ends.

Note:

Can be downloaded for free:

<http://golemtapes.blogspot.com/2012/04/g12-oort-trio.html>

Desir de Mourir

(Germany; Depressive, Atmospheric Black Metal)

<https://www.facebook.com/DesirDeMourir>

Incur the Wrath of Silence (2010)

8 Tracks (Tape – Puzzle Records) -_-_- (50:16)

Actually, I cannot bear it any more: the sample of Aleister Crowley, which seems to appear at least on one release per month. Is this he the only person one can use and who happen to have samples spread throughout the vastness of the Internet? Are there no other ones that could have been use for the recording as well? In fact, the one sample of a woman screaming in agony has also appeared on countless recordings already – see the Non Serviam (Sweden) demos (!) as a point of reference. Or are these mandatory in order to be accepted in some kind of obscure black metal sub-scene?

Anyway, the German band Desir de Mourir – French for desire to die – plays depressive black metal and sticks to it over the course of the entire album. Furthermore, it is a one-man thing, which presents the listener a good amount of the all too common facets of such an approach. For instance, there is a drum-computer, whose play is, as can be expected, quite tiring now and then. Luckily, Dissen, the person behind DdM, does not attempt to overload the composition with this element. It is interesting how little is actually necessary at times and how well the band is able to create an atmosphere and this only be using vocals, guitars and noise effects.

Conceptually, it all follows a rather simple pattern: the vocals have a metallic touch and scream something in rather suitable tempo/dynamics, while the guitars tend to create the basis for it all through a texture-like sound in the background. To put into plain words: nothing considerably new. Nevertheless, there are some interesting facets in how it had been executed. Not always but now and then nice melodies shine through the dense mist of shallowness. It is not possible to point to a composition and describe it as overtly and consistently good, but at least the band attempts to take the listener by the hand.

It is difficult to say whether the amount of repetition and limitation has a backlash in some respect. Nevertheless, it all feels slightly thick and glue at times. Considering the total average of the tracks this should at least not come as a surprise. Except for the intro or the outro, none would be below the mark of six minutes. And even though it does not feel bloated, something that could be described as overtly surprising does not dare to pay a visit as well. It all meanders on, might be a charming companion somehow but is actually be a bit too generic. Not bad for a first demo but definitely nothing more.

Note 1:

This review has been written on the tape version released by the German label Puzzle Records.

Note 2:

Not more than twenty copies exit of this tape and the label does not carry them anymore. It might be difficult to obtain a copy then. A re-release has been made by Karge Welten Kunstverlag.

Collapsing Universes (2011)

8 Tracks (Puzzle Records / LAFES) -_-_- (58:31)

Another year, another release... and a polished one at that. Incur the Wrath of Silence hit the surface in 2010 and Collapsing Universes would be the album to succeed it. In style not much has changed. The samples have been binned, the production has been considerably improved and dark ambient elements have found their place in the concept, yes, the guy from Norway has found another follower.

An improvement can be discovered in the guitars. While the debut had this odd texture-like sound in the background, created with the help of a certain type of manipulation, this has vanished on the second demo. Instead, the guitars can be experienced in a much better way, which leaves a much better impression, because now the various layers – guitars + bass – can be appreciated appropriately. The touch of a bedroom

band has ceased to be, which has also found expression through the very neat design of the release.

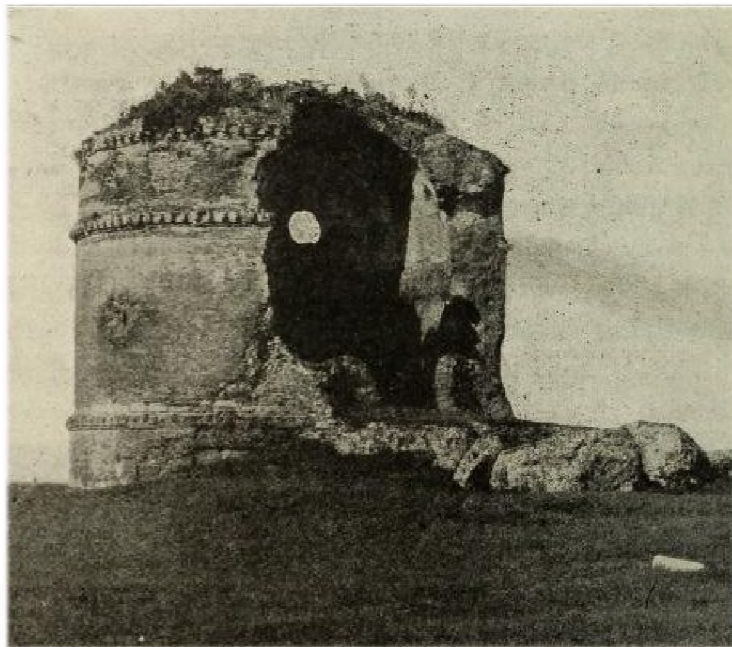
A lot has been balanced out, appears neatly arranged, is harmonious and bereft of a lot that would or could be perceived as disturbing. The German band – still a one-man thing – is really able to offer some well crafted and arranged melodies with a surprising amount of versatility and catchiness. The mixture between depressive and atmospheric black metal elements is impressive at times. For instance, there are counterpoints in the flow of the riffs, which give the impression of moaning. Breaks help to prevent some kind of monotony and also solo parts in the guitar make an appearance. In short: the band did a lot of things right on their second recording.

Be it “Nihilistic Decision” or be it “Obsessive Disorder”, to name two examples, it all has such a wonderful touch and atmosphere. The middle part of the former sets a wonderful contrast to what the band had done before, helps to unravel the conceptual idea of *Desir de Mourir* without much difficulty. Or take the pace of the latter example. Really easy to enjoy and be fascinated by it.

All seems to be well, right?

FOR FUCKS SAKE ... NO!

How fucking short-sighted does one have to be in order to ruin such a release with such a pathetic vocal performance? The heavy distortion sounds like an excuse, an excuse for not wanting to deal with other musicians and for falling back on the smallest line-up possible. Someone with a proper voice could have made this release really great, but monsieur Dissen thought it would be best to do the job himself. And how



he failed at it. Nihilistic Decision has been praised for the atmosphere above ... but what had been left out: the same is basically destroyed (!) by some pointless noisy thing, which is supposed to be the vocals and which supposedly adds something to the composition. Whatever that may be. In fact, on several occasions throughout the recording the volume level of the voice is so low – distorted and clean one – that it is basically drowned by the instruments. Did anyone actually listened to the “final” product before spreading it with the help of a label? Even though the first demo had this inexplicable performance as well, it appears in an overall noisy kind of black metal, but it “dressed the part”; so to speak. Yet, such cannot be found on this second output anymore, with the result that the vocals give the impression of a

counterpoint where such a thing is not only unnecessary but actually displaced.

It is tiring ... tiring ... tiring ... tiring. Again and again band uses the same odd and pointless manipulation of the vocals. Is this the standard voice thing in all the cheap recording programs? Does no one feel like they should get some professional help or at least try to stand out amongst the legions of other projects, who happen to have this element as well? Is the black metal scene a horde of sheep or lemmings? From the point of a reviewer it is difficult to put this all into a proper perspective. The bottom line in respect to this release would be: due to the overall impact of the vocals everything becomes intolerable, nauseating, pathetic. Impossible to really enjoy.

Collapsing Universes, what an appropriate title: 'cos it all crumbles down in the end... down into nothing ... into a sphere that so wonderfully represents the score for this review: zero points.

Note:

Written on the edition released by the German label Puzzle Records.

Kaoteon – Provenance of Hatred (2004)

(Lebanon; Black/ Death Metal, Grindcore)

3 Tracks (CDr – Various labels) - _ _ _ (13:10)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/KAOTEON/32072402693>

Robert Fisk reminds the audiences at his talks about carrying history books with them, because these help to understand the world they are living in, enable each of the persons to place the events of our days in relation to those that have already passed by. History repeats itself. Chaotaeon – a merger of the words chaotic and aeon – had been the original spelling of the band's name, but due to troubles with the authorities the band changed it to Kaoteon afterwards. These two words should be taken literally. This country has seen a lot of wars, conflicts, massacres and turmoil in the 20th century and the book *Pity the Nation* presents it all in some (at times gruesome) detail. The Lebanese musicians remind the Western audiences about what had taken place in this distant but incomprehensible country; the short-sightedness with which politics played out their disgusting and ideology loaded performance.

While a good portion of bands, especially those in the black metal genre, have a strange and maybe even mythical fascination for death, destruction and killings, chances are that none of the musicians have ever experienced war in any kind of way. Chris Hedges for instance describes it as the “most potent of all drugs that have ever been invented by man”. It puts the finger in one of the hypocrisies which can be identified as underlying the extreme metal genres and the ideas that are expressed on albums too numerous to count or list. The imagery of Hollywood has not much to do with reality and the history books of the West are generally “cleansed” from the disturbing nastiness and the horrific effects of war, torture and the like. Words lose their meaning and make it difficult to comprehend what had happened at a certain time period. One example (to bring up one example that does not deal with the Holocaust): to think of that parts of Germany lost over seventy percent of the population in the Thirty Years' War is simply unimaginable. Sadly, even though the echoes of this horror can still be felt in this country today, the metal/art community refuses to deal with this topic; there are a few exceptions though, but from a general perspective this arguments holds without difficulty. War is often mystified, deconstructed and cleansed of all that does not fit with a simplistic (manichaeon) world view.

Kaoteon enables the listener to take a small look into how art can respond to the terror that had been inflicted on a society. A society, which has seen various interventions by other countries, numerous bloody massacres, sectarian violences, clashes of religious minorities/groups, a civil war ... and so on and so forth. Such has found a specific expression on this album. The lyrics are disgusting, loaded with curses and openly explicit. Each of the compositions pours the stuff out, throws it towards the listener, wants (demands from?) this person to digest it all. There are no moments in which thoughts circle around, enable to listener to grapple some phrases and keep them in the memory. Somehow it all reminds on an endless vomiting – on a side note: their debut album has the title “Veni, Vidi Vomui”, which expresses this sentiment quite openly – of things that need to be said, must be expressed, are necessary to be spread among the masses. At the time when this first demo from Kaoteon has seen the light of day, it appears as merely two dozen other ones from Lebanon; source: Metal Archives search engine. A small scene not many care about, know that it exists, so why should the band waste their time and energy with pleasantries? It seems they wanted to leave no doubt about anything and attempted to place all into the proper perspective.



Another aspect has to do with religion. Take a look at a history book, which deals with the situation in Lebanon. It is messy and the spiritual aspects are no exception from this. Once a site like Wikipedia deals with the matter as follows – Lebanon's religious divisions are extremely complicated, and the country is made up by a multitude of religious groupings –, then it should be obvious that things are anything but easy in this regard. Originally “drafted” as a Christian state, it has seen a shift towards Muslim religions of various sects over the years; following Robert Fisk and his aforementioned book. As can be imagined, this comes with a backlash and metal bands, generally those with a small following or so-called easy targets, are the first to suffer from this. Even though this comparison is a bit unfair, a similar trend can be found in various Muslim/Islamic countries throughout the Middle East and the Maghreb.

Therefore, the "Provenance of Hatred" is much more complicated and facetious than it is obvious from the first sight. The background is of much more importance, compared with much that is released in the West for instance; especially considering the degree and way in which Lebanon is portrayed in the Western media. Stylistically Kaoteon, and this is still common for metal bands of this cultural sphere, sticks to a rather conservative and Western-oriented type of metal. Three facets make an appearance here: death metal, black metal and grindcore. Growls and scream are important in the regard of the concept, because they help the band to create something that would reflect the aggressiveness had "hatred", so to speak. As can be expected, their part is far overblown and drowns the instruments unnecessarily. When it comes to these, not much can be said except for certain tendency to follow a standard set of playing such a mixture of genres. Melodies are simple and do nothing more than providing the basis in terms of the setting. There are no solos, there are no outstanding conceptual ideas or breaks that need to be discussed or emphasized. Intensity over atmosphere, this is what the band had headed for in their first attempt. A state of amazement is never reached. It is rather something to get a crowd started on a live concert, than to fascinate the Western audience with surprising twists or local cultural flavour. A straightforward attempt without much prospect of inventing the wheel anew.

The first demo of Kaoteon is hardly a masterpiece. It feels like a band, whose music attempts to deal with their own frustration and this has found expression in something rather from the gut than from the brain. From today's perspective it is difficult to really appreciate the performance, because the debut demo does not seem to have aged very well. New bands from the small Lebanese scene have surfaced, spread music on a higher professional level and even Kaoteon themselves have had a chance to gain support from a well-known European label for their debut album. Provenance of Hatred sheds light on the seeds sown back in 2004, which have grown and to some extent matured on their "Veni, Vidi, Vomui" output. Be it the versatility in the drums, the extreme nature of the vocals or the hectic dynamics, overall, the general idea can already be discovered but it somewhat fails to impress.

Nevertheless, it is an noteworthy piece of metal art and definitely recommended to those, who want to gain some insights into the ways and styles this extreme kind of music has found expression in places in which it is challenged by authorities. Even after all these years not all is well in Lebanon. Sadly, the Western media rarely puts an eye on this country left alone on their art scene. Only in days of trouble and turmoil it is brought back into the spotlight: the all too common sensationalism and hypocrisy in the news. Well, such had been the case lately, due to the assassination of Wissam al-Hassan; look it up.

An explicit and powerful first attempt from a scene not many have on their radar or might be interested in.

دمار – Triumph Through Spears of Sacrilege

(Lebanon; Black Metal)

5 Tracks (MLP – Nuclear War Now! Productions) - _ _ _ (19:39)

<http://www.myspace.com/damaarfansite>

دمار (Damaar) are extreme. Not only in terms of the metal standard in Lebanon, but from a general perspective. With the exception of the intro the music on their first and only output is nothing but a violent blast of black metal with death/thrash influences. Chaos rules here with an iron grip and leaves the listener (nearly) no time to breathe, relax or contemplate; remember silence is just a preparation for another wave of noise – paraphrasing the well-known proverb of Horace. In consequence it reminds on early Dark Funeral, Infernal, Sacramentum, Marduk ... the current suggestions are a bit misleading and that for various reasons.

To be frank, Triumph Through Spears of Sacrilege is a mess. The sound, surprisingly powerful and well produced, leaves the listener basically steamrolled once the album is over. Intensity is one aspect of it all, but it has reached a state in which it all becomes incomprehensible. A ton of noise... a load of pure aggression and adrenaline. Furious guitar work, a bombardment of drums and on top of it powerful black metal screams. It is difficult to make out something specific in terms of the riffs or arrangements – except for the solo parts that is. Here, the combination of all is the important aspect and not the atomization of each of the facets, which can then be examined separately or with precision.

دمار's output is conceptually rather minimalist and except for some small phrases not much of the lyrics can be made out. It all remains blurred and distant. What makes "Triumph Through Spears of Sacrilege" rather pitiful is the general absence of any kind of identity. Interestingly, the opening intro – references to Islamic preachings and incendiary – might also be of a kind that would suit a band which plays in on a current (rising?) trend of Islamophobia in the West. Whether this band from Lebanon wants to get associated with this faction is an open question. It is therefore a pity to not see any lyrics or to get some deeper insights into the background of the music. Of course, the band has to avoid getting too much attention in a country in which their music stands diametrically opposite to the predominant religion. Nevertheless, it all leaves a slightly bitter taste.

As often, the black metal remains unexplained and incomprehensible. It does not deliver a message outside of aggression and fails to offer a perspective. It is merely a very brave attempt of expressing something that stands up par to the level of short-sightedness and intolerance of some of some religious leaders; here: Islamic, but there are enough numbnuts in other religions as well, so other examples could be brought up without much effort or difficulty. Black metal is a circus. Black metal is entertainment. The reason for this is the direction in which the music points. Those, who happen to blow themselves up after they have been indoctrinated by clerics or whatever, will hardly ever had the opportunity to experience this release or might never ever had a chance to do so. The target is the Western audience – especially considering that the music had been spread by an US-American label –, but these people will fail to understand the texts for two reasons:

- 1: gap between the cultures
- 2: general physical absence of the texts (as they do not appear in print)

But maybe I am a bit unfair in this respect and setting the bar too high up here.

Anyway, but when it comes to comparisons, then there is only one band that comes to mind: Halla from Iran. This band and their Lebanese counterpart **دمار** are rather an example for what is possible and to what extremes music from Islamic countries can be brought. Maybe even pseudonyms are not enough to protect the musicians from the mercilessness, which they receive from the defenders of the supposedly merciful. Music like this reminds on the image "The Scream" by Edvard Munch. An individual wants to express something and even though the message might be impossible to grasp, is it not the attempt that counts?

Maybe this sums it up:

War-like music from a war-torn nation.

Bloody Cunt – The Fecal Dawn of Chaos

(Denmark; Punk, Death Metal, Noise)

4 Tracks (3"CDr – Shit Music for Shit People) - _ _ _ - (6:06)

<http://shitcore.dk/smfsp/index.html>

Violent noisy chaotic music. Well, judging from the sound it had been recorded live in a rehearsal room and everything left the way it entered the recording machine. Short eruptions, vague melodies, messy, strange, odd, 9ugil., Wegröihqr3ofsdemn, fewIUWEKNSDQKLJAQDC-jxcvioswEFDmälopkjfwövbökjnaqWK>yäpohgvlQ2ERKPÜ NRKSLnmpofdsiajkhfdbgediöo0trüßelw mq esrd,fgch ,ßb+vcuighvjab Nälögsydhkxf

You get the idea. It would have been more fun with additional ten seconds ...

You get the joke?

No ... ah, sod off.

Bestial Death – Suicide of the Immortal (1986 / 2011)

(Israel; Thrash Metal)

5 Tracks (Tape – Israelhellbanger Records) - _ _ _ - (17:37)

<http://www.myspace.com/bestialdeath>

One of the wonders of the modern age is the reappearance (revival?) of music that some believed to be gone forever. It is especially peculiar how music from the early days of the scene receive a re-release and this helps most certainly to fill the gaps in terms of understanding their evolution in a better way. One example for this would be the Russian funeral doom band Бой. Their first demo marks, along with the outputs of Thergothon and Mordor the beginning of this genre. While the latter two have been known for quite some time, this other band has only seen a proper release of their music recently. Bestial Death follows the same line.

Salem ... Salem ... Salem, the first years of the Israeli metal scene are nearly solely made up of this band; in terms of the releases that is. The exception would be 1986. With "Suicide of the Immortal" Bestial Death spread their one and only demo rehearsal tape. For most it has been impossible to lay hands on this rare and obscure artefact, because it took until the year 2011 to see it hit the world in a professional kind of way; previously it only be dubbed by friends of the band in the all too common way in the diy scene. Now it has even been remastered and is able to shine in all its glory. Somehow.

It is a dirty, nasty bitch that torments the listener here. Suicide of the Immortal is raw, unpolished, noisy and straightforward thrash metal. No compromise, nothing progressive or daring. The Israeli band plays the basic old-school type of this kind of music. Nice solos make an appearance, the vocals come over quite muffled and with growls instead of screams. Slayer, Possessed, a bit of Sepultura and Sarcófago ... well, you get the idea. From today's perspective it has not much of innovative elements in it, yet it this tape has a certain charm. The combination of a muddy sound, the limits in the song-writing with the focus on the type of music presented above and consistency of the performance make it easy to appreciate it all.



Suicide of the Immortal is a burst of energy from the early days of the Israeli metal scene. Sadly, the band did not spread any further outputs. This kind of stuff is rather for those who like to dig deep into the early days of a scene and explore the first glimpses of the metal concepts.

Note:

Their label Israhellbanger Records called it quits and this tape is also not available from the person behind it anymore. Some distros might still carry it though.

Niebla Funeraria – Demo 2011

(Spain; Black Metal)

1 Track (Tape – It Lives In The Woods Records) -_-_- (7:56)

<http://itlivesinthewoods.blogspot.com/>

7:56 ... the entire music on the first and so far only tape of the Spanish band Niebla Funeraria has a length of seven minutes and fifty-six seconds. One track appears on it: The Rain. Not overtly common in the realms of black metal ... or? It is pretty much nonsensical. It is without a reference. It is just a term for a weather event. Too much of it can have a devastating effect in certain environment or situations, while it is also a welcome sensation on a hot summer day. Odd, to say the least.

Add the music to this kind of pondering and the wonders know no limits. The one composition can be divided into three parts: an intro, a metal one and an outro. When it comes to shares these are nearly equally divided, which only increased the level of confusion. It is neither completely the former, nor does it offer something conclusive in terms of the latter style. What is the point of it all?

The black metal part is more an eruption, something that appears out of nowhere and sets the stage for something that never really occurs. A short but well executed atmospheric scenery is set, whose brittleness only leads to a familiar result. What the band Niebla Funeraria wanted to demonstrate with this piece of art remains hidden, but considering the amount of money one has to pay for shipping and handling from Spain, it feels like a rip-off.

Juan Jose Calarco, Manrico Montero, Pablo Reche – Embalse (I)

(Argentine; Field Recordings)

1 Track (MP3 – Netlabel: Impulsive Habitat) -_-_- (19:19)

<http://impulsivehabitat.com/releases/ihab036.htm>

I am a hectic person. Coffee is something I need to swallow every day and which I enjoy consuming; not in masses, but on a considerable scale. For me, it is difficult at times to sit still, let the thoughts wander around and contemplate about the wonders of our world. Not that I would be entirely unable to set myself in such a mood, yet in my veins there runs the all too common hastiness or restlessness of our days. When writing a review, when preparing a magazine, a track like Embalse (I) is a real challenge indeed. Not so much because of its length, but rather due to my impatience with which it progresses and meanders on.

Field recordings can be a pleasure. Some have been covered in this magazine already but to even attempt to scratch more than the surface would bloat this humble piece of mine to such proportions that a serious handling of the entire thing would become impossible.

Embalse is inoffensive and terrorizing.
Embalse is water.
Embalse is a wind play.
Embalse is a bit of noise.
Embalse is vague.
Embalse can vanish, fade, be unrecognizable.

Headphones are mandatory for this track. Do not even dare to listen to it on a stereo or via computer loudspeaker or such stuff.

It is a distant piece of music. Incomprehensible. Offensive and depressive at the same time. It gives you an idea and it leaves you alone. Now there is nature – water – then there is an artefact of man and then there is nothing.

Imagine the following situation: you simply want to sit at a certain place, want to relax and there are always noises – various typologies and with various levels of concreteness –, whose minimal existence break the line of thought, disrupt the flow of the brain and scream in their minimal noisiness with unimaginablechutzpah. Yes, it is all a matter of perspective. Even a mosquito can be as loud as hell.

It all comes down to a matter of perspective and mood, I guess.

Peachonfuse – I'm free,I'm not free. (2012)

(Japan; Experimental, Ambient, Noise, Pop)

5 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel: Element Perspective) - _ _ - (26:39)

<http://freemusicarchive.org/music/peachonfuse/>,

<http://peachonfuse.jimdo.com/>, <http://elementperspective04.bandcamp.com/album/im-free-im-not-free>

Contradictory
stylistically uncertain
Peachonfuse is free to be not free,
electrocuted and spastic.

The release is a play with the listener. At times certain and comprehensible, at other confusing and spasmodic, while towards the end it is even daringly luring. Stylistically a strange potpourri with various types of electronic elements. Ambient, noise and even pop make an appearance as well ...

Hectic, no mercy
you can listen but hardly understand
Language barrier, you see
Harmony as a compensation

Electronic through and through, with a good amount of remixes ... or are these variations? Experimental, fragmented, incoherent and some strange post-industrial melody lines; ho-la(3331 voices edit). The need of an harbour on shore of a sea of random turmoil.

You feel it is somewhat mocking
Musically only slightly shocking
Hardly ever fully rocking, socking
But the cliché remains untouched.

recording type display ##### 3331,
Akihabara Chiyoda art festival in September, #####
talking ##### recording ##### people voices
there.

"We change under the influence of something every day".

sing ##### making sounds
2011.

she usually ##### "lolita voice" ##### like people
remind spacial memory.

(Sources: see links; without the edits of course)



Note:

Unlike my normal routine, I have posted two download links instead of one. The FMA one provides an opportunity to comment on the album, while the bandcamp one comes with additional material and proper editing of the files. I fail to see the point of a difference in this respect, but that is the way it is.

J. Surak – Hotel Bethanien/Gates Open (2012)

(USA; Experimental, Drone)

2 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel: Zeromoon) - _ _ - (46:39)

<http://freemusicarchive.org/label/Zeromoon/>

Two long tracks, whose titles appear merged together in the name of this release. The general direction can be explained without much difficulty and effort: a calm opening increases in intensity, noisiness and complexity. Both compositions offer this kind of approach and is quite interesting to enjoy it, because the build-up is as such as to create a certain kind of fascination in the mind of the listener. It is a play with some elements and not merely a simple escalation in the level of volume or the arrangement of one motive.

There are differences of course and not both pieces follow a similar pattern or structure. Each can be distinguished from the other without much effort. In terms of aggressiveness and intensity “Gates Open” – nomen est omen? – has more to offer, while the opener would be considerably longer; nearly ten minutes. Nevertheless, despite being well crafted and pretty much enjoyable, the overall impression suffers from the limitation in novelty or rather the absence of something that can be described as daring.

Why not a bit more oscillation? Why not more variation in the concept and the flow? The mixture between ambient and drone is well done, well produced and such; it even has some nice bass sound in the background as a counterpoint. But once the listener is into the second composition, it all begins to wear off already. The feeling of “I have experienced this before” cannot be shaken off in any kind of way.

If you need to pass some time in a train or on a trip, then this might be something for you, but to enjoy it under normal circumstances could prove to be difficult.

Aberrant Vascular – Aegisthus (2012)

(Finland; Avant-garde/ Operatic / Black Metal)

5 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (43:20)

<http://www.aberrantvascular.com/>

Maybe a band has to come over a bit pretentious at times. Why remain in the ordinary routine of crafting music, when something else is possible, too? Aberrant Vascular has a name in the underground for some obscure and even slightly overdone operative metal with an avant-garde touch; see their demos, which they spread as a free download some years ago. Aegisthus is their recently made available debut album ...

The title of the album deals with a rather long story, which is too complex to explain it in detail. As usual in the Ancient Greece too many characters are involved and these do too many things; to boil it down is rather challenging. Sex, incest, revenge, power and all such stuff are the core essence of it all. Look it up at Wikipedia, will you? Or read Homer's Odyssey. As of now, there are no lyrics available ... it is therefore merely speculation that each of the tracks deals with a certain passages of this tale. The last track is an exception though and deals with Charles Baudelaire's 'Les Fleurs du Mal'.



The musical concept on Aegisthus hovers around Arcturus' *La Masquerade Infernale* or the music of the Norwegian band *Source of Tide* or maybe even a bit of *Solefald* (early). Not only the strange counterpoints of the operatic vocals and the occasional growls will leave a certain amusement, also the overall atmosphere, this mixture between pretentious (or even arrogant?) operatic parts and modern extreme metal (influences range from black over death to electronic), has been done in such a neat kind as well as convincing kind of way that the Finns are able to "entertain" the listener over the entire release with an astounding amount of facets. To avoid some kind of confusion, this is not some kind of comedic take on such a concept. There is nothing funny in how everything had been arranged or merged together. Yet, there is an easiness in each of the compositions, which leaves the listener in a state of sheer amusement and bewilderedness.

Nevertheless, it all feels a bit ... it feels it could have been ... could have been even more insane. A nuance here, a nuance there. Aegisthus is full of strange switches in tempo, arrangement, concept and such, there is no doubt about that, but it comes over rather planned and not "unintentional" or surprising. Arcturus or Solefald are more extreme in this regard. More in vein of the Finnish band *Spiderpact* on their *Goatspeed* into *Magenta Vacuum* output – sadly their only release so far – would have been nice. Maybe this impressions stems from a lack of strange aspect, which do not appear on the *Aberrant Vascular*'s debut. It is a metal release and even though it is unconventional in its own way, from a broader perspective it is still on the safe side of the shore – even though one might at least give the musicians credit to have dared to take a glance around the corner or beyond the chasm. This is not enough though and *Spiderpact*'s approach reveals this in a nice kind of way. Their ep is fascinating because it dares to be different, because it wants the listener to take this trip, wants this person to deal with the odd juxtapositions. One example: "Stormclad into Nihil (Existential Penetralia)" comes with the sample of a crowded pub, while later the piano plays an eccentric tune, which becomes a focal aspect of the music all of a sudden. This more in complexity, variety and disturbing elements is what *Aberrant Vascular* do not like to add to their art. Their music is too metal and therefore too conservative.

Aegisthus is an interesting release ... but the music feels it could have been a good amount stranger, confusing and daring.

Note:

Can be downloaded for free from their homepage

PsychoBliss – Dreams of Utopia (2012)

(USA; Gothic Rock, Doom / Black Metal)

5 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ _ (24:08)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/PsychoBliss/294474900580170>

Thrash Metal (early), Gothic/Black Metal (later), this is the current way the band appears at the Metal Archives. With only two releases and the second of these only to see the light of day very recently, this development is a peculiar one. Furthermore, the current type of music has also some influences from the depressive black metal genre; this is not bad per se, but helps to place the music a bit better. These aspects should be kept in the back of the head for a moment.

I wonder whether the US-American band "Herodias" or the Australian "The Show Death" had an impact on PsychoBliss and in terms of their musical progression. Both are conceptually not too far away from this project in question and also have an emphasis on female vocals – clean and croaking. They are accompanied by a male one, whose style shows a similar amount of facets. It helps to create a nice and dark atmosphere, whose main downside would be the flaws in the production, which has the largest impact on the voices. Aside from this, the gentleness of a good amount of the music, this slightly dreamy and minimalist but not too depressive dark rock with metal hints, leaves the band with enough room to let the vocals unfold their potential. The terms presented in the first sentence of this review are misleading. While Gothic still hits the spot somehow, black metal is on a scale that it can be neglected.

Guitars are there, though, and in terms of the riffs their play is quite minimalist, with a certain focus on tremolo picking – even with post-rock influences. They are there and they are supposed to lay the basis for it all, but due to the production – see above – they are not overtly dominant. Whether this is bad or not can be left open for discussion, but the more minimalist the overall approach becomes, the more it is up to the vocals to fill the spot. Actually, they are able to get this job done ... in limits that is. Every time it all progresses towards a low level of complexity PsychoBliss switch the tone of the music. It is nice to follow them on this trip, even though it is not in the realm of metal any more.

A sweet melancholy can dotted down at the end. A sweet and charming piece of music. Nothing new or too fresh, but can be enjoyed without much difficulty.

Note:

Tape available through Tridroid Records.

<http://www.facebook.com/TridroidRecords>

Promiscuity – Infernal Rock 'n' Roll (2011)

(Israel; Black / Speed Metal)

3 Tracks (Tape – Israelhellbanger Records) -_-_- (11:14)

<http://promiscuity-band.com/>

Israel has a small metal scene. Around thirty-five releases have seen the light of day in 2011, which is slightly more than the two preceding years (30; 33). Well, at least it enables you to follow the evolution of it all without much effort or difficulty. From the outside perspective matters do not seem to be too rosy. Take the label Israhellbanger Records for instance: after a few releases they called it quits. In fact, it had been difficult to find metal labels from this country in general; the latest software update at the Metal Archives has made things considerably easier though. Bands seem to tend to spread their stuff rather independently or through some a label from abroad.

Promiscuity play anything but a modern version of metal and it is somewhat natural to a sample of an era tghat is long gone by. Yes, it is fun to poke the listener with a Billy Haley sample, but it is a joke that wears off all too soon; especially when you consider the overall length of the tape, which is a bit more than eleven minutes. It would have been nicer to have some additional ones that help to carry the first impression on. The general approach is some kind of black/speed metal, which presents a very basic and not too daring interpretation of these two genres.

No filler material, no core-influenced screams, no keyboards, no progressive song-writing, not a nice sound. It is the Hellhammer and early Bathory type of thing, with a better production and slightly weak vocal parts now and then. Rare solos help to break the monotony of the progression of the music in some respect, but aside from this it all meanders on with a steady kind of progression. Promiscuity's music has a certain pace and they stick to it. Only some slight variation is allowed to appear now and then.

Infernal Rock 'n' Roll is too nice. What is lacks is some kind of punch, some kind of dirtiness and identity that would make it distinguishable from other bands of the same niche. It is too limited in its facets and without surprising elements. A safe approach and this leaves a bit of a disappointment. As usual, a first demo ... and despite a good quality, it fails to impress thoroughly.



Sources of the pictures:

<http://archive.org/details/awakeningofdeser01birg>
<http://archive.org/details/chatsonoldprints00hayduoft>
<http://archive.org/details/destructionofan00lanc>
<http://archive.org/details/diekunstdesradie00stru>
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<http://archive.org/details/modernetchingeng02holmuoft>
<http://archive.org/details/rockymountaingoa00granrich>

Outlook

More of the same ...

maybe another special section ... maybe ...

Reviews, interviews ... etc.

